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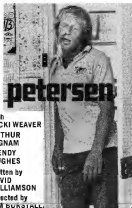
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Front Cover: Max Galloway on Grand-Eye-Dick in Richard Franklin's *The True Story of Elisha Hall*.

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On Time, Under Budget



Richard Dreyfuss (left), Faye Dunaway (right) looking serious in *Presumed Guilty*.

A producer has to have an idea of figures and accounts, a background in film production, an interest in cinema, an idea of how far to drag a bargain without snapping off relations all together, an ability to sleep anytime and a capacity not to listen too hard when people come in telling you everything is falling down around your ears. That sort of thing happens all day, everyday, and the sun is still coming up.

: Richard Brennan

Richard Brennan, one of Australia's best known film producers, first entered the industry in 1964 in a production assistant, researcher and assistant director for the ABC. His work for the commission over the next four years included a number of film dramas (RUNAWAY, WHEN A GIRL MARRIES), and the current affairs programs THIS DAY TONIGHT and SURVEY. Between 1968 and 1971 he worked for the Commonwealth Film Unit as production manager on seventy all their fiction films including GENTLE STRANGERS (Cecil Holmes) and FLASHEPOINT (Brian Hume).

Brennan left the CFU in 1971 to produce Peter Weir's HOMESDALE (which was awarded the Grand Prix at the Australian Film Awards the following year), and Tom Cowan's THE OFFICE PICNIC. During 1972 Brennan acted as produc-

tion manager on Bruce Beresford's ADVENTURES OF BARRY MACKENZIE, and in 1973 became the director of the Australian Film Institute, operating on a brief to make the organisation more democratically based.

In the first half of 1974 Brennan produced Cowan's PROMISED WOMAN and was the associated producer of Tom Jeffrey's THE REMOVALISTS. He is currently working in executive producer on SALUTE TO THE GREAT McCARTHY and production plans for the rest of 1974 include a film version of DON'S PARTY, Tom Cowan's new feature ROCHE and Cecil Holmes CALL ME BY MY PROPER NAME. In this interview, conducted by Rod Ekins, Brennan talks about the producer's function, THE REMOVALISTS and the role of the Australian Film Development Corporation in the local industry.

CP: The Removalists is your most current project. How did it originate?

BRENNAN: Margaret Fink approached me eighteen months ago and had secured the rights to David Williamson's play and asked me what I thought of a film version. I went to England for six months during which time she came over and we discussed the possibility of using Robert Menzies, and having the film directed by Polanski or Ted Koppel. Eventually the Australian director, Tom Jeffrey, expressed interest in the film and after showing Margaret some of the films he had done for the ABC she decided to use him as director. We then sat about putting the production together. At that stage it was only a matter of approaching people with the property.

Tony Buckley was contacted as writing it. Graham Hill wanted to shoot it and Ian Hemmings was interested in doing sound. I approached the AFDC with the screenplay in February, but you are always starting behind the eightball when developing a play. If you not selling people say it is too tall, if you not selling they say it is the most vital section of the play, if you follow the original performance it has slavishly adhered to the original, if you try to improve it you are painting a rose red, if you take it to extremes you are dropping its original force and comprehension and if you leave it (make it) too cinematic and like a TV drama, etc. etc. etc. The AFDC assessments come back saying most of these things. It was suggested we talk to the assessors and avoid having the project deferred. We met and realised then that the film would take a long account of the first three scenes and theatre was different media.

CP: What kind of film will it be?

BRENNAN: It reminds of William Wyler's Detective Story. David Williamson tells me he has never seen it but it does have a similarity to a good detective, just a detective who in Detective Story takes and is a staged psychopath and in The Removalists turns into a staged, even milder psychopath. In both cases the assessor's original acceptance of them is completely shattered by the end of the play.

CP: Who is the production company?

BRENNAN: Margaret Fink Productions, company Margaret, her husband and other people who are involved in Margaret's husband's business activities, Myself, David Williamson and Tom Jeffrey stand to profit from the film's success, but aren't members of Margaret Fink Productions.

CP: You're all got percentages?

BRENNAN: Yes.

CP: What are they?

BRENNAN: Nothing.

CP: Is everyone else paid as a flat rate?

BRENNAN: Yes.

CP: What is your function as associate producer?

BRENNAN: I'm Margaret Fink's writing me producer in the accepted sense.

BRENNAN: Margaret's particular concern is in the visual side of the film. She is taking a strong interest in the area of design and colour. I see that it comes in on time and under budget. I also have control of the crewing, a guy on casting and handling things like the insurance, budgets, etc.

CP: And post production?

BRENNAN: The editing will be very much in the hands of Tom Jeffrey. Tony Buckley and Margaret — a musical consultation was. I'll offer advice if I am asked but I won't be there on a day to day basis.

CP: Will you be selling the film?

BRENNAN: I'd like to go to London at the end of the year with Promised Woman, The Removalists and The

almost impossible to interest people in investing money in a project that doesn't have the Government fund behind it. The Fund have put up half of the money in the form of a two-year loan.

CP: What's the nearest rate?

BRENNAN: Seven per cent.

CP: Seven per cent? A lot better than a bank.

BRENNAN: Yes. It's hard to get money that cheap.

CP: After the Development Corporation, who was approached for the balance of the loan?

BRENNAN: Russ Woods Productions, Clearing House, TVW7 and Leon Fink Holdings. They had invested some interest. This was obviously negotiated by the Film Development Corporation's staff.

CP: Who finally got money into the project?

BRENNAN: The investors don't want it known publicly.

CP: What deals are worked out with investors and what sort of return will they get on their investment?

BRENNAN: The film has been involved with loan always tied to interest, people in the same areas the AFDC offers. If they put up 100% of the finance for the film they are entitled to their finance back plus 35% of the profits. If they put up 35% it's 55% at the end. If they put up 30% it's 37% and so on. If you put up some of the money yourself you receive (after the initial return of production cost) is 25%.

CP: If you think a film has strong commercial possibilities it is an extremely more attractive deal.

BRENNAN: Barry Mackenzie has paid for a lot

now. I don't think you would get anything back for seven or eight months.

CP: Have you tried to sell the film in advance?

BRENNAN: Yes, but only to ascertain their interest, not to finance anything. I prefer not to distribute it myself because it's so incredibly time consuming. On the other hand if we weren't able to get an attractive enough deal we would have to consider doing it ourselves.

CP: Did Barry Mackenzie show the potential of overseas markets for Australian films?

BRENNAN: It made money back for somebody internationally. It has been running for three months at the Columbia in Newbury Avenue and selling less office records than I haven't ordered anybody buying new Cassettes.

CP: Are you suggesting the deal Mackenzie got interests in a business?

BRENNAN: The deal itself might have been good, but the actual expectation of turning out the records back here has fallen below expectations I think.

CP: Are you thinking of an overseas market for The Removalists?

BRENNAN: I went to London after Promised Woman and spoke to eight or nine distributors there. The play of The Removalists had won the Evening Standard award for the best Commonwealth production, David Williamson won the Standard award for the most promising playwright — the comparison being judged by Lindsay Anderson and Lorraine Olivier. It was the first time a non-British play had won that award. I expect David Williamson to be very sought after in London by the end of the year, especially with What If You Died Tomorrow opening in November and Michael Ballhaus talking of doing "Don's Party" some time before the end of the year.

The Removalists has just finished its run in London. It is a London release and Stanek has had one. People are going to have heard of Williamson. However, if it's a big success in England, don't think it naturally follows that it will take off away from that. I never really believe that. Russia could make money in America. I always thought that it

Nobody is trying to make another THEY'RE A WEIRD MOB or NICKEL QUEEN anymore. If they are, they're keeping very quiet about it.

Great McCarty to try to interest publishers.

CP: How important is AFDC to you?

BRENNAN: Once you get the money from the Film Development Corporation, it is much easier to raise the rest of the finance. I know of no production that's had half or three quarters of the money from the AFDC that hasn't been able to raise the rest. It's a terrible lever. I find it's

of film now.

CP: If I put in \$30,000 into The Removalists, when could I expect to get a return?

BRENNAN: The Removalists is showing in May and June. It expects to be ready for showing some time in September. I don't know what the distributor's recommendation for release will be, but it will probably be around October, November or December. If you put your money in

Chris Heywood in *Tree Jiffy* 'The RemainsRichard Brennan with Germaine Greer in *Last of the Summer Wine*.Jackie Weaver and Richard Brennan in *the* *Remains of the Day*.

would be a smash in Australia and thought it would be very successful in England but I don't think you can take it much further. It wouldn't mean anything in Hong Kong or Greece for instance.

CP: You might compare *The Remains* with something like *Lawless* or *A Long Goodbye*. *Remains*, isn't it the best Australian film with dialogue similarities to films from the British and Italian neo-realist periods?

BRENNAN: There is another — Brian Kavanagh's *City's Child*. I compare that to suburban dramas like *Woman in a Dressing Gown* — the English likes suit Greer. I think it's good film, but like *City's Child*, it was two years ahead of its time.

CP: One of the interesting things about the French and British new wave was the sociological preoccupation of making films which reflected certain social values of a certain section of society. That doesn't appear to be occurring in Australia at the moment. We want to, and are making films but they don't seem to be following a trend like certain British and French films did. Australian films don't seem to be following any distant trend.

BRENNAN: If you are thinking of the British and French neo-realist period, you have to remember the definition of what was getting public acceptance got wider and wider. In France it was loosely embracing the idea of spontaneity. Godard was trying to do a monogamy-type program film, Truffaut was doing *400 Blows* and Rivette was doing *Pain au Levant* — they are all very differently intentioned films, creating similar but not similarly sized responses.

CP: And they were trying to be different, trying to bring something new to the cinema.

BRENNAN: I think Australians are attempting to get away from the type of movies that have started in television and film co-productions. Nobody is trying to make another *They're a Weird Mob* or *Nickel Queen* any more. If they are, they're keeping very quiet about it.

CP: One of the good things about the Development Corporation is that they aren't using the same criteria as an exhibitors' group might when deciding whether to finance a project.

BRENNAN: The AFDC started off saying that its film had to be economically viable. Now they have gone into what they call the high risk area where they invest in film, or loan money to film that they feel have just chance of paying off at the box office. There are no firm rules about what will pay off at the box office — it's only to try to work by the "computer idea" of what will go. I saw *Berserk* yesterday and I thought it was a lousy movie, but it is absolutely picking them up. Maybe it's the post-Watergate thing — people like to pretend the movies as public events are incredibly different to their own. They end up boundlessly horrified and appalled by the knowledge that Nixon talks in exactly the same way they do.

CP: If a film partly financed by the AFDC goes over budget, who gets the bill?

BRENNAN: The private investor cuts. Whether the AFDC could do the money is to meet the bill and take the property over themselves is up to them. They are in a triple bind of course. They can't really take the line, "If you don't make it, you can rent me in the gym after school." At the moment they are saying the AFDC won't finance films unless they are satisfied with the producer's capability of extending the production.

CP: How did *Prisoned Women* originate?

BRENNAN: Tom and I did *The Office Fink* together two years ago and had a gentleman's agreement to do two films together — *Rocky Road* and *Flack*. He approached a Greek merchant living in Sydney, Theo Pankratiou, and discussed the possibility of doing a film adaptation of his play. Tom showed me the screenplay and I did a budget and a schedule. He took it along to the AFDC and they said they would finance it if he could nominate a producer. He came back and we discussed it, did a second draft of the screenplay and went to it. I finished at the AFDC. The crew included several people from the Play and Television School and a number of people that worked on *The Office Fink* — a fourteen-man crew. We shot it in twenty days. Tom directed and photographed it.

CP: Any release plans?

BRENNAN: We have discussed exhibition with Lewin Films, who have a chain of 26 Greek cinemas through Australia. Initially PW like to run it for two weeks either at Sydney University or the Academy in Philadelphia. I have also approached film distributors in Greece and they are all interested.

CP: What do you think of theories of financing movies by shares — a percentage for participation?

BRENNAN: As private you are gambling on yourself. I think you can expect the best response from people if you are asking them to gamble on themselves. Also it is a way of blurring the costs down. I haven't done that much since *The Office Fink*. It was automatic in

reality because up that sort of interest is supervising No. 56 or *John* or *World Men* or *Line of the Damned*.

CP: There seems to be 100% employment for producers at the moment, or perhaps there is just a lack of them. Do you think we need more people to get projects together?

BRENNAN: Philip Adams hasn't done anything since *Buzz*. Oh, Broady's with the South Australian Film Corporation and the McElroys seem to be working as a number of producers, but beyond that, I don't know any other career producers. But the agent brokers in Piccadilly are

about the finance and whether we will go over budget. He has not somebody the day before who has told him his last production went \$500 over and he means somebody the next who has just gone \$50,000 over. I just hope nobody introduces him to Joe Mankiewicz and they discuss *Claymation*. . . .

CP: There seem to be two aspects to being a producer — bringing a film in on time and on budget, and then the ability to sell it, locally and internationally.

BRENNAN: I am confident *The Remains* will sell to the Great

If I had walked up to Bruce Herscovitch or BARRY MCKENZIE and said "You're fired", he would have laughed in my face. I was the production manager; he is a shareholder in the company.

are available at the hardware shop. There is nothing to stop you calling yourself a film producer.

CP: What sort of expertise do producers have to bring to a feature film?

BRENNAN: Not being late, having some idea of figures and accounts, having a background in film production, an interest in cinema, an ability to get along with people, an idea of how far to drag a bargain without snapping off relations altogether, knowing when to walk away from something because it is not good enough, subtle nerve, an ability to sleep any time and a capacity not to listen too hard when people come in talking you everything is falling around your ears. That sort of thing happens all day, every day, and this one is still coming up.

CP: It seems at the moment the producer is a breed of his that lives out of his cinema and is very talkative. Do you think we are going to see Barry Herscovitch who said that he only sets up offices when he is actually working on a feature. Is total honesty necessary?

BRENNAN: If you set it down in the one place, the next thing you have to have is a secretary and a lot of overheads. If you concentrate all of 1984 activities into the one corner of the earth, you get lonely and bored and unemployed and start driving round the place trying to pick up business in his sleep.

McCarthy will go well on the international market. *Prisoned Women* will be well received in Greece and Yugoslavia — it's got the box office potential of something like *Olivia* and *Madigan*. But there are lots of extremely beautiful looking films that nobody goes to see at all — like *Chabon*.

CP: Terry Beards has advanced the opinion that his film, *Line of the Damned* has a better chance of getting mainstream profits because it has been designed for an international market. It is supposed to have an international sort of character about it.

BRENNAN: I agree it's a great thing to have a product you know will go well on the international market but I am not sure what that entails. It was suggested to us that we change the title from *The Remains* because people don't use that word overseas. It was suggested we drop it. I said, "Don't do it." I suggested he change the name *KISS* because it's not known outside France. I think you can force an acceptance of cultural idiosyncrasies, or if not, at least as a second line.

CP: Do you think we had serious investment in Australia film?

BRENNAN: I think the possibility of working with overseas directors and technicians and actors isn't to be second at, they have obviously got a lot to teach us, in terms of just sheer expertise. But I don't like the idea of overseas finance and I'm not convinced it's necessary.

CP: Do you think finance for Australian film will come from investors and merchant bankers?

BRENNAN: Let's look at the film *Money Train* starting other than the AFDC. Half the finance for *The Cars That Ate Paris* came from one source — Rayon Sankar Productions. And the money came from Hong Kong. Some from the one source — Ross Wood Productions. His investment in *Stone* and his proposed investment with us in *The Remains* is a cash or kind basis. He might put a credit amount in, but he is asking his cameramen, his editing facilities and other post production services. That is a fact given him an interest in the film. *Prisoned Women* is set up on deferreds from Tom and myself. Film actual cash investments from Tom and myself. The

Remains we have discussed. I don't know about *Line of the Damned*. Between the Money Train from the Porters — a merchant banker. *Swainy Too Far Away* in the South Australian Film Corporation. There is no real picture in there although there is a merchant banker and two production companies.

CP: Is the producer in Australia somebody who is able to creatively manipulate in the production?

BRENNAN: It's the sort of men where people do try to develop a particular reputation around their projects, and I suppose nobody could have a harder job doing that, that the producer. His function is to negotiate — to create the right sort of atmosphere for a film to work in. I am not, if you would go to a set and said, "Hey, look, do you mind? You would set the camera shoulder, but I don't do that. If I have got something to say I usually talk to the director about it privately and if he and I are in agreement I might take it up with the most relevant person.

CP: Have you ever had to pull the director off camera?

BRENNAN: Oh, so I don't think that's very likely.

CP: It happens a lot overseas. I was just wondering whether you have ever been in a situation where you have been unhappy with a director and thought, "Monter has been made."

BRENNAN: I have never been in a position to do that sort of thing. This is my sixth time as producer, but it has never occurred to me. Obviously it is conceivable. Supposing I had walked up to Bruce Herscovitch or Barry McKenzie and said, "You're fired." He would have laughed in my face. I was production manager, he is a shareholder in the company.

RICHARD BRENNAN
FILMOGRAPHY

The Debt to Pay (16 mm) 1960-61: Production Manager

The Unhappy Face (16 mm) 1961-62: Director

Lord Mc. Your Stupid (16 mm) 1962-65: Director, Script, Production

Selection Interview (16 mm), *The Country Couldn't do Without You* (16 mm), *Where are we Heading* (16 mm), *Tampa* (16 mm), *Country Jazz* (16 mm), *Gentle Strangers* (16 mm), *Flanagan* (16 mm) Film Australia, Production Manager, 1966-71

Or Fancier Hold Your Peace (16 mm) 1970: Producer-Cor-Director

Remains (16 mm) 1971: Producer
The Advantages of Barry McKenzie (35 mm) 1972: Producing Manager

The Office Fink (35 mm) 1972: Co-Producer

Prisoned Women (35 mm) 1974: Producer

The Remains (35 mm) 1974: Associate Producer

Sally in the Great McCarthy (35 mm) 1974: Executive Producer

Bar Robinson composed a *Money of Education* in La Jolla University. He is also working on a 30 min short called *Rebel Run*.

I think if a film goes wildly overbudget, there's no real excuse. Somebody is sitting there saying "I have a dream" through clenched teeth.

the cost of *Prisoned Women* and would have been astronomical in the case of *The Remains* or McCarthy, but I would like to do it on my own. I actually produce.

CP: You seem to take a critical stance in most of the films you work on.

BRENNAN: There is not much point in taking on anything I don't like. There are enough good scripts around. It's a sort of preselection phase — meaning to work on films you really really identify with. I've got a very middle class thing about making the film for other people. I suppose, but I don't think I would

CP: How important is it to keep a film on budget?

BRENNAN: I have never gone over budget and that's my most complicated virtue. I suppose. It's going to happen some day but I am doing my best to defer it. I like death, for as long as possible. I think if a film goes wildly over budget there's no real excuse. Somebody is sitting there saying "I have a dream" through clenched teeth and nobody has the ability to exercise a control over what they are trying to do. I have talked to David Black weekend after weekend over *Sally in the Great McCarthy*. David wants

PROMISED WOMAN

Assistant Director Graham Shirley recounts the shooting of **PROMISED WOMAN**, a new film from Tom Cowan.

A cramping figure in black and jewelry of a lost lover are a long way from *The Office Picture*, but are vital components of the new Tom Cowan feature *Promised Woman*. Venturing from *The Office Picture's* study of mystery in the courts of police sergeant Yulian, *Promised Woman* is substantially a tale about the difficulty a Greek village woman has in accepting her dowdier role in contemporary Sydney. With the movie successfully recorded and a shooting date fast approaching, *Promised Woman* is the first of a two-feature program Cowan has planned for this year. In addition, he has had a number of offers for his services as a screenwriter. If time allowed he would like to renew his association with Pinelish Harris Roddy, for whom he shot the Italian feature *Fueral Rise*. Roddy has asked Tom to shoot and co-direct his next feature *Wild Wind*, but as the strength of *Promised Woman's* involvement, it probably won't be possible.

According to Tom Cowan, one of the hardest jobs facing a director is making a big film and remaining individual. Tom likes to regard each of his own films as an experiment, an exercise in saying and doing something that is different from the majority of "serious" films that will continue to be made. *The Office Picture* was both an experiment in trying to say something real and an experiment in telling a story that didn't have a conventional end caking. It was also an experiment in making a feature for a quarter of the normal cost, and it's significant that *Promised Woman* and the feature that will follow, *Rocha*, are getting progressively, if slowly, bigger. It's no secret which doesn't worry Tom because, with longtime friend and B. C. Productions partner Richard Brennan, he's built up an alliance of creative sympathy which will justify *Promised Woman* and ultimately *Rocha* to wider circles of personal and (quite incidentally) monetary reward.

I gave precedence to personal in this production because Tom Cowan is the closest thing this country has to a feature film maker. Though

much of *The Office Picture* was ad libbed, the basic scripting and constructing was entirely Tom's. *Promised Woman*, adapted from a twelve-year-old stage play, was almost completely script, but in seeing Tom give a typographic central performance from Yuliana Zagon and remarkable ad-lib performances from Kate Fitzpatrick and Darcy Waters, it's not hard to see why *The Office Picture* worked as well as it did. On *The Office Picture* he was not only scriptwriter and director, but also co-producer, production manager and art director. *Promised Woman* may have had the benefit of a larger crew, but as director of photography, Tom had a freedom equally as taxing as all those of the earlier film. In spite of this he thinks the result has been worth the effort and is seriously considering shooting *Rocha* as well.

In 1961 Tom wrote, directed and photographed a thirteen minute film called *Revela in Sydney* for the Commonwealth Film List. A spontaneous record of the impressive Greek actress Hellen Rigas had of Sydney and of the people she met, the film involved the participation of Greek playwright Theo Panikeras. Six years earlier Panikeras had written a play called "Three Away Your Harmonica", which was staged by Sydney's Hellenic Theatre Company. Tom had talked of turning the play into a film, and even after Panikeras had left to enjoy solitude as a TV playwright in Athens, Tom continued to develop the idea under the title *Promised Woman*.

En route to Moscow last year, Tom visited Panikeras and with the assistance of their discussions, continued the adaptation. Certain characters were eliminated, new ones added and the action was no longer tied entirely to the confines of a Newcastle boarding house. The concept of the proxy bride, or "promised woman", had also changed much in the eleven years since the play's first appearance, but it was decided to leave intact the assumption that such marriages still occasionally occur.

As developed, the plot of *Promised Woman* is that Helen, the wife of a boarding house

proprietor, arranges a marriage between Antigone and the younger of two brothers, Telis. When Antigone arrives in Sydney, Telis discovers that she has lied about her age and regrets her complicity. The older brother Manolis attempts to help her, at first reluctantly, then finds himself competing with the crowded attractions of Telis. Much of the action develops around Antigone's withdrawal into dreams of her past and her growing desire to remain as independent as circumstances in the boarding house will allow.

In July 1973, two huge ships carried 4,000 people along the coast that border the countryside outside Moscow. Viewers of that number were guests of the Moscow Film Festival. Almost a day before the arrival of Kate Fitzpatrick, Tom was driven into a group of circling Yugoslavs. Among them he met Yuliana Zagon. Several days later, Yuliana was one of the group who congratulated Tom and Kate on the Moscow screening of *The Office Picture*. Helen Yuliana and Kate met for the first time and became friends, partly because they could both speak French better than each other's language.

Eighteen days before the scheduled start on *Promised Woman*, Tom departed for Rome. The object of his visit was Irene Papan, who had already said "no" to the second draft of the script but was receptive and willing to discuss a third. Tom spent several days explaining that the part had been updated with her in mind and that her appearance would preserve the seams of the film in any country of the world. Miss Papan disagreed, stating that success would depend on the employment of a second international star. As neither Miss Papan's forthcoming commitments, nor the prospect of building up another nine held hopes of immediate production, Tom departed for Sydney and a meeting with Yuliana Zagon. He was visiting her at the suggestion of Kate Fitzpatrick. Fourteen days remained before production was due to begin, but after Yuliana had



Yuliana Zagon as Antigone in *Promised Woman*.



Yuliana Zagon (Antigone) and Helen Yuliana (Telis).

PROMISED WOMAN

agreed to come to Australia and appear in the film, Tom consented to move the starting date back a fortnight to June 5. By the time he arrived back in Sydney on February 14, he had cast Takis Emmanuel as Minos. Ironically the man that had "wounded" Irene Papas as Zorba the Greek, Takis, like Yelous, was the veteran of so less than twenty features.

One of the main preoccupations to date had, of course, been casting. From the *Hellenic Theatre Company* we telephoned and chose two actors of considerable quality — Nikos Gatsos (as Telas) and George Velouris (as the boarding house proprietor Nook). Two actors from sibling agencies that paraded roles were Christos Lefkas (as Nook's wife Irene) and Alex Alexandrou (as Basil, a musician), while Dany Waters (as the husband of Marge, played by Kate Fitzpatrick), is a legendary member of the Sydney Push and a friend of Richard Brinsley.

The hardest roles to cast were Minos and the witch-like Elphie. Ideally we had hoped to cast as many Greeks as possible, but it proved difficult to find middle-aged Greeks (that could not — New Greek actors like Ren Hadjilov and James New were initially considered for the role of Minos, then two weeks before his departure Tom found Jim Panagiotopoulos, a writer for the "Hellenic Voice") His physical and mental make-up were ideally suited to the role, and his experience brought about yet another of the changes Minos underwent before he reached the screen. Panagiotopoulos had not specified Minos's occupation, but in Tom Cowen's hands he was first a clerk, then a market peddler, and by the time Panagiotopoulos was cast, a flower peddler. In real life, Panagiotopoulos is a part-time teacher of Greek to primary school students, so this in turn was imagined into the character. With Tom's return from Rome, where he had replicated Panagiotopoulos with Takis Emmanuel, the character still sat the language diem but had become a portrait photographer. By comparison, the transformation of Taki from printer to demolition contractor was relatively uncomplicated.

Then came Elphie. After naming the casting agent from an extensive roster, who told us the didn't need to be told how to act because she'd been on the benches for forty years, to a Greek granny, who couldn't even climb the stairs to the audition, we cast retired English/Australian actress Enid Lottimer. Three weeks later, we cast Therese Sontag. Graciously selected, then rejected by Oliver Hewes in the casting of *Talks*, Therese had been trapped for most of our audition period by flooding in Brisbane. Her nephew, Kostas Akam, insured us that she'd be perfect for the role of Elphie and that he admired our courage if we dared to take her on. A fortnight before production she arrived at Richard Brinsley's dressed to kill, impressed by her look and a manner that gave hint of considerable energy. Tom re-cast the role immediately. To Enid Lottimer, he gave the role of herself in a sequence unfortunately once deleted, but the change has otherwise reaped its reward. No less reliable than predicted, Therese's every appearance is a delightful blend of menace and melodrama. Garbed heavily in black and with a voice to rattle the Acropolis, she is the very essence of the film's darker moments of doom.

The Sydney location schedule was set at three weeks. After a hectic half-day of filming *Argento's* arrival aboard the "Australia" at Circular Quay, we moved for most of the remaining first week to a boarding house in Kambilli. Tom had shot James Robertson's *Joker* there last November and had transferred its glitzy corridors as being ideal for the location he had in mind for *Promised Woman*. As the equipment had had few quibbles about the film school crew, they imagined that a "slightly larger" feature film crew would place little more strain on their resources. It is that aspect they weren't exactly right, but thanks to the advent of *Argento's* as second assistant Enid Sullivan, their appearance on set were limited.

In spite of the inevitable interruptions from acrophobic lead plumbing and returning drinks, Tom is glad *Promised Woman* was shot entirely on location. He admits that about ten years ago he preferred studio filming — "Then I found out

that Filles had a good thing going when he shot '80's' on location. The element of fantasy was much stronger in '80's' when he didn't see sets. Compared to *80's* in *Sydney* where a lot of the shooting was done in the streets. The feeling that came from the locations of *80's* is gone entirely. A real location is more desirable because you can see the location for other features or realism."

Altogether, we were seven days in the boarding house. Our largest restriction came with the Camerabug, a large bread-oven device which somehow subdued the chaos of the *Thames Camerabug* we were using. If Tom wished to reduce any form of visual mobility, the quickest way was to limit the camera unimpeded and to take guide-tracks for sound. If a dolly shot was required to cover essential dialogue, an hour could be spent in mounting and belaying the Mump, clearing enough space and getting enough people to hold the dolly down the corridor and into the dining room, or later on in the shooting, along a good quarter of Victoria Street.

On Wednesday, March 11 we moved out of the boarding house for four days. On that day we filmed most of the principals sailing heavily through a rain squall nearby at Randwick Racecourse and the next day and night at the Athens Restaurant. The Friday we filmed at Hellenic Park, Newtown, and the Saturday both at the Sydney International Airport and the Strick Horn. Monday and Tuesday the 18th and 19th were the last two days at Kambilli and from there we moved around a variety of Sydney locations which included a demolition site in Bondi (with walls toppling obligingly on cue), various streets in Newtown, St. Stephen's Church in Darlinghurst, Paddy's Market, and the Open House. Friday 28th saw the last few hours of Sydney location shooting at Doolan Restaurant and on the morning of Monday April 1st Taki and Yelous received about four signatures at the Eric Porter Studios at North Sydney.

The following day, Tom and Richard Brinsley left for Greece. Yelous had departed on the afternoon of the 1st and after a week in *Belgrade* planned to join them as location. Theo



Shooting *Promised Woman*. L. to R. G.D. Armstrong, Mandy Smith, Christos Lefkas, Yelous, Zepi, Chris Kewell, Tom Cowen and Enid Lottimer

PROMISED WOMAN

Parkes, suffering a broken leg, was unable to be of much assistance, but an ideal village was found in Galaxidou, situated about 40 km from Delphi. Antagonis's lover, another sexual casting requirement, was Sissi by Jean-Claude Petit, who later took Richard Brennan to London and introduced him to Lindsay Anderson and other members of the Movement. Experience's company Petros is a film buff, who as well as his strong impressions of the war is Cocteau's *Torture of Olympe* was Parkes's assistant for five months and helped Anderson promote *It...* in New York. Three days of the *Promised Woman* team's stay in Greece were spent filming in Galaxidou. In the remaining one and a half weeks, all but one of Antagonis's family were recruited from the village. The coupman was an actor from Athens who, as Antagonis's younger sister, adopted a role much expanded from the original script.

For Toni, the film's most valuable experience has been working with two imported actors. Quite establishing, however, have been the newly-discovered "quirks" of Nikos Gatsos, who plays Ivis. A trained stage actor from Athens, Nikos has lived in Australia for three years. Like most Australian actors with little film experience, he has little of the discipline that brings flawless continuity to the performance of Yelena Zayon and Takis Emmanuel. But whether modeling the urtic with Antagonis, or facing the urtic with a BLF hairy (played by Grigoris Petis), Nikos' presence remains unclouded. For Toni and editor David Stevin, the chief interest lies in whether the basic quality of his performance will match, second or pain inside that of the imports. Yelena's performance is, of course, central to *Promised Woman*'s overall effect. Like Kate Fitzpatrick's Mary in *The Office Party*, Antagonis says comparatively little, and like many other aspects of the earlier film seems to exist on an infinite number of levels.

Yelena's popularity with Yugoslav and Italian audiences means that the film will have a guaranteed market in those countries, and because of its subject matter, *Promised Woman*

will also be sold in Greece. In London, Richard Newman picked up a few firms about distribution in other European countries but at this stage has no definite plan for distribution in Australia. There will, of course, be a market in the Greek community and ultimately on television, but Toni and Richard expect that most of the film's returns will come from overseas. For Toni, the market factor is at this stage "not terribly important. It is now too late to get the film into Karlovy Vary (the year's equivalent of Moscow) and in his opinion "It is not worth putting a film into a marketplace festival like Moscow or Cannes unless you can go to the festival and push that film. I didn't know the ropes when I went to Moscow, but selling the film there would have involved organizing a screening room, inviting buyers to a screening and having the necessary professional material. The Moscow representative for the Australian Department of Trade didn't even know that. The Office Party was an official Australian entry into the Festival. They didn't do anything to push the film and they wouldn't normally do anything unless they were asked to."

Among his influences, Toni sees great advantage in the cultural clashing properties of Italian Neo-Realism, the French New Wave and their more recent equivalents in countries like Cuba and Argentina. As movements whose development did not rely on an established studio system, he feels they have a powerful counterpart in Australia. With this in mind, he recognizes that now more than ever before, there is a production demand that favours his own style of film-making. Not accepting the assertion that many many means greater production value, he says "It can't all be bad luck that people who spend a lot of money end up with such dull, homogeneous results. A low-budget film involves many risks, but I think the ultimate horror is for an insurance company to finance a film. That would be as bad as working for the ABC, working for the committee system."

With *Backo*, to be commenced later this year, he wants to make "a totally original film". He's still searching for a lead — "and thought of Peter

Wheble but I need someone more weatherbeaten. Robert Maltman as he was about ten years ago."

'PROMISED WOMAN'

Producers: Company, B. C. Productions. Producers: Richard Brennan, Tom Cowan. Director/Designer of Photography: Tom Cowan. Script: Tom Cowan, adapted from "Throw Away Your Harmanica" by Theo Patrickides. First Assistant Director: Graham Shirley. Second Assistant Director/Production Manager: Errol Sullivan. Production Designer: G.E. Armstrong. Costume: Mandy Boyd, Collette Sharkey. Production Secretary: Mandy Boyd. Editor: David Stevens. Sound: Lawrence Fitzpatrick. Boom Operators: Max Hemo, Don Mac. Camera Operators: Malcolm Richards, Clive Rowell. Grip: Don Hemo, Jim Goodall. Lighting: Brian Westmore. Sdls: John Delaney. Music: Vassili Deramios. Stock: Endless regular 3234.

CAST

Yelena Zayon	Antagonis
Takis Emmanuel	Miragis
Nikos Gatsos	Toni
Kate Fitzpatrick	Mary
Darryl Waters	Ken
Carmel Calton	Helen
George Valant	Nick
Alex Alcazar	Rosie
Thos Servatos	Elphos
Joan-Joan Fyfe	Lover
Maria Valant	Chlo
Jos Kallio	Mr Papadopoulos
Anne Halliass	God at front door
John Papadopoulos	Herself
Sally Blake	Lulu
Graham Shirley	Employment Officer
G.E. Armstrong	Nurse
John Delaney	Trolley Attendant
John Naxos	Grunt at airport
Dorethy Economou	Bride at airport

Graham Shirley was one of the original students of the Assistant Film and TV School where he completed the course making *A Day Like Tomorrow*.



Director Tom Cowan on location for *The Office Party*.



Darryl Waters and Kate Fitzpatrick on the set of *Promised Woman*.

A Portrait by Max Taylor. **JOHN PAPADOPOULOS**

Papadopoulos is at 26 preparing to make his next film. He slumps in his chair across the table from me. "I've not done this sort of thing before — talking about myself."

"Well I was a national serviceman in Vietnam (an artillery painter), and we all came back to base and watched films after night or nine weeks in the bush — dozens and dozens of the nearest movies. I was becoming concerned with what I'd do for a start when I got back to Australia. I had been a clerical worker at a Melbourne psychiatric hospital. There one day I saw a film called *Incident at Owl Creek* (1961), a 12-minute surrealist piece which impressed me with its simplicity... it all looked so easy — no dialogue, just a lot of excellent images and good effects. About then I felt I was becoming deeply interested in making my own films. I didn't wake up one morning and say, 'Well, I'm going to make films. It never happened that way... I was a gradual realization as I was bombarded with films, and I was caught."

"So I came back to Australia, and for six months I was thinking all the time in terms of film... I'd tell myself I'd like to make a film. I was working at the psychiatric hospital, and along came *Out of Mind*... an idea taken from psychiatric records."

Basically it is about a young, disturbed man riding in a train, who is suddenly taken with a series of vivid hallucinations, culminating in his jumping from the train. "I tried to get into his mind, and show delusions of religious persecution."

Most of the shooting took place in and around my streets. "I shot on 16mm film stock, early mornings. It wasn't a slick piece by any means, but the story came across. For me it was a training film. I showed it to the people at the Film School to help get my scholarship. I also showed them *DeadEnd*."

Papadopoulos went into sound with *Dead End*. Once again he was concerned with an extreme human problem — schizophrenia. "The film's about the last 15 minutes of this man, a 35-year-old drunk. He walks home and dies... but first he says."

In 1962 the Film and TV School's advertisements for 12 weeks' scholarship were answered and since Papadopoulos' proved successful he moved to Sydney. "There was a lot of freedom at the School. Basically not really a film course as such. They gave you the facilities to make films. There were writers there, and you just had this enormous opportunity to further your skills. I didn't make the three films I was supposed to produce, and that I suppose was because I increasingly fought against accepting the stories available for filming. I was determined to use only one writer, Sally Maize, and this wasn't possible — certain people wouldn't accept that idea. However I continued to see the School's teachers. The lectures were a constant stimulus. Megan McCulligan-Sey was very helpful, Mike Williams was a cut and talked about interviews, and we had many very experienced ABC producers. It really was a remarkable experience as I was tapping into remarkable ideas."

During this time at the School he directed *The Offering*, stemming from an idea by novelist David Ireland. "It took six weeks to make using professional actors and crew — my first dialogue





MATCHLESS

film. It was about a woman who seeks out newly released prisoners and apparently wishes to help rehabilitate them. It turns out she's slightly sick anyway. It was a kinky idea. Sally Blake wrote the script. The whole thing was so unusual, and a lot of people thought it was a fantastic idea, but a bit vague in places. I agree.

"I found it difficult directing the actors. My idea of human behavior is a lot different to theirs. Here were people who simply weren't used to. I had this idea of abnormal people, and the actors found it difficult to cope with. I think the only way actors could understand these disturbed people would be for them to spend some time in a mental hospital. Now don't get the idea I want to make cerebral films, but these films were about aspects of dementia, and the actors had to observe and formulate a clear picture of what was intended."

Matchless took an aggregate of 18 days to shoot, and five weeks to edit. The 55-minute (16mm, black and white) film was made on a budget of \$8,500, all of it except for \$2,000 of his own cash, coming from the Experimental Film Fund. It has been entered by the Australian Film Institute in the Grenoble Film Festival as well as the Youth Festival in Marseilles, France.

Papadopolis describes *Matchless* as being a simple statement about three people living together — two young women and an old man — and, as the film progresses it becomes apparent they are each disturbed, in their own way. When someone from outside breaks into their sublimely and cautiously, even in a small way, a drastic imbalance is created.

It is the real meaning could tell me people who intrude and they are completely out of tune with the inn's needs. "I think my three people wanted to be left alone, that's all. The small genetic interference is catastrophic."

The idea for *Matchless* grew from quiet talks between the director and Sally Blake, who inspired it. Sally has been closely associated with Papadopolis since the early Melbourne days. She now is a freelance writer in Sydney.

Papadopolis has watched *Matchless* about fifty times now, and while he doesn't believe he'd want to make the picture differently, he can see areas he would have wished to have corrected — the pacing and editing. "I'd like to develop my craft to such an extent that the only mistakes I make are technological ones — mistakes that only I can see."

There has been some comment about the oblique technique used in *Matchless*. I asked him about it. "No, it wasn't conventional. I wanted to get this displacement feeling which exists throughout the film. I sat down with the actor and we worked it out. . . . some shots shorter, or longer than usual, creating an unusual time lapse and pacing in keeping with the characters and their situation."

While Papadopolis' cinematic interest to date has been with people facing crises, he doesn't seek any public or personal confrontations in these areas. "I don't like arguing, I'm not over those as disputes. I find it's often difficult to bring my point across in words. I find it more simple and more effective to use film."

Identifiably, Papadopolis wants his future work to continue, to move, to make people laugh. "What I see in film I may remember at the next day, but after that it's just forgotten. . . . there's no cumulative effect." His is looking ahead towards his first fully structured feature film in which he can use a pro crew and performers, a narrative film. . . . "probably about unfortunate circumstances, not necessarily involving poverty, but showing a subtle definition of character — but not as pathetic people-wait as my characters in *Matchless*."

Current plans concern a project — *A Jag's Test* — a 45-minute psycho-socialist drama, "telling a story of a man already dead." This marks his first venture into color, using naturally, a script by Sally Blake. "It's a far more average film — not as gentle as my past efforts."

It will be made partly on a grant from the Council for the Arts' Film and TV Production

Fund. "I'd never get money to make this film from the AFDC. I have \$20,000 which is the Production Fund's upper limit, but I need another \$12,000 or more to make it successfully. We have formed a company, Pendragon Films, to raise the additional money with Harvey Shore acting as Producer for the film. Harvey is currently attempting to raise the money with some moderate success. Certain organizations have offered help, such as accommodation, travel and the like for free. When the time comes I'm sure we'll get the extra money."

Shooting, to take about three weeks, will probably begin in September. There'll be a cast of about 10. "A lot of extras needed only for a few hours. It's possible to make the film for the amount, it's all location stuff — no sets need to be built."

Papadopolis believes it's a vehicle that could go down well with international audiences, although he hasn't yet talked with commercial distributors. "I think many distributors have some difficulty visualizing scripts. It's not much use talking before you have something to show. The problem isn't making the film. . . . it's selling it. You have to have the dynamo and put on your film yourself. We should get together with a group of film makers, select very good films and show them ourselves — outside of the Coop scene. Jag's Test will screen, in all bookshops in various Pendragon films. I'll put on my own show on all three — grab another show from the Film Society. . . . The Vincent Library."

Films produced with Experimental Film & TV Fund grants are placed in the Vincent Library's hands. The Library, put together in 1978, is administered by the Australian Film Institute as a film makers' service, helping with distribution and promotion throughout Australia and the world. Money from film sales and rentals goes back to the film makers. "I've done a lot to push the film myself and there's a limit, let's face it, to what even the Vincent Library can do. The producer has to help too."



MATCHLESS

Has he made any money out of his film efforts so far? "I've been flopping *Matchless* around all the commercial TV stations and not getting many comments. They just didn't want to buy. Fox Channel ever at Channel 7 and the film was too disturbing, but he didn't distribute and I didn't go out to film him. People who have seen *Matchless* have been very moved because of the film's composition. However the ABC television people are expressing a strong interest in buying it. They really like the film and that's made me very happy. Now it comes down to what sort of money they offer me, and if they come up with what I consider a low price, I'm not going to sell. If they want to buy it they should make a good price. *Matchless* is my most important piece to date, *Blues* and all."

Papadopolis deplores attitudes of discontent displayed by television stations. "They're not interested in film makers — they take a bloody long time with your prints — they're just very pedantic, and in the end you have to constantly hassle them to get an answer. And that's mostly a negative."

Television must play a more subtle role in displaying local product, in showing seriously intended films. "Now, local film must be pushed, more pressure exerted by the Government. I'd like to knock a television studio and show censored Australian films so as to show the viewers what they're missing out on. There'd be a mighty reaction for sure. I've been thinking about this for months now. No, I don't see myself as a political activist — I'm no revolutionary — I'm just a member of the Labor Party, and believe the public must be shown what's not going to our core."

Actually, Papadopolis would like to make material for television. "I wouldn't tie myself to those species of anything. I like a lot of time to think about films, my own work, my approach to film. Really, I sit on the ground and discuss film and ideas in the street. . . . they simply go off and write, and that's just great."

Papadopolis has little inclination to work in-

side a film production studio. "I simply don't want to work for someone inside the industry full time. It's no good to me when I'm making the show. I don't want to work as a second or third assistant to anybody. It wouldn't. For instance, take a job with Film Australia. "I could probably get a job some place checking documentaries, but it's a waste of time and it would be unfair to offer my services when I'm totally involved with the production of my next film."

Asked to assess Australian films of the past there was a long pause. "*The Siedling*! *White* — I liked that. Nothing else is meaningful right now." Today? "I like *Case That Ate Paris* very much. Peter Weir is a marvellous director. . . . I'm looking forward to *Sandy Harsh*! *Stone*. There are any number of talented film makers making features today, but there's room to make the smaller films too. I have enough experience to make those sort of films which have, after all, been a European trend for a long time, where artistic, significant films have emerged. Why not here? I am at the stage now where I want to make a film."

The ideal way for him to continue working seems to be with Sally Boler as his scriptwriter. "Unless I find somebody else who is able to script for me with as much care and interest. I saw myself as a director first and last. I don't want to get into the scripting or editing roles, although I'm always making lots of suggestions. I sit with the editor every day of the cut, and it's the same with the camera. I'm always making suggestions on scripts."

The experimental movie has a future, but Papadopolis feels there is a need for greater control by the funding sources. "After all anyone can make a film. It's just as easy. I feel there should be greater concern demonstrated by the funding people. I feel that this country, however money would help film makers a great deal. They should be asked for more details of their productions, and this may help the young film makers. It could lead to more meaningful experimental films being

made. You can learn a lot more by planning carefully, and not just rushing into a project. The film maker must be inspired."

While he's enthusiastic about the great system to film makers in Australia ("There are absolutely essential — it's just not nice that they give you that much money"), he believes more is needed than merely money. "I'd like to see a decent resource centre where a typist, telephone, and equipment are provided. At the moment we only get the money — that's a pity. I'd like to see this sort of thing happen right across Australia." ■

FILMS OF JOHN PAPADOPOLIS

1971 OUT OF MIND

Running Time: 5 minutes. Made at Melbourne.
 Story: John.
 Script and Music: John.
 Budget: \$100.

Camera editing script by John Papadopolis.

1972 DEAD END

Running Time: 10 minutes
 Sound: John.
 Script and Music: Produced at Melbourne.
 Budget: \$600.
 Director: John Papadopolis.

1973 THE OFFERING

Running Time: 18 minutes
 Sound: John.
 Script and Music: Produced at Film and TV School.
 Budget: \$1,000.
 Director: John Papadopolis.

1975 MATCHLESS

Running Time: 25 minutes
 Sound: John.
 Script and Music: Produced at Melbourne.
 Budget: \$1,000.
 Producer: Director: John Papadopolis.
 Screen by Sally Boler.
 Camera: Russell Boyd.
 Editor: Ken Goyell.
 Performer: Sally Boler, Dennis Obo, Allen Penney.

Most films syndicated weekly unless so noted or on request. 1975/76 refers to a number of publications.



FATHER OF KONG

Alan Osborne examines the animation techniques of Willis O'Brien

The name Willis O'Brien is well known to film historians and animation buffs the world over. He was the man creative force behind the launching of animated three-dimensional model work in shorts and later in feature feature films. It was O'Brien who, from both the technical and imaginative points of view, paved the way for both his own fantasy feature films and those of the few others who went to follow him into the field of animation and special effects, a field in which a love of the work combined with unstinting personal effort is called for from the earliest stages of production through to the last.

O'Brien's devotion to his work was total, but he failed, during his own lifetime, to receive the recognition he deserved. Now he is able to see many of his projects brought to full fruition before his death in 1962. And yet his greatest triumph, *King Kong*, is today a box-office failure, and the constant re-releases of this film, together with repeated television screenings, will keep the name of Willis H. O'Brien living for as long as there are people who thrill to exciting films, and appreciate truly individual talent being put to its rightful use.

Willis Howard O'Brien was born the son of William Henry and Marjorie Gung O'Brien in Oakland, California, on March 2, 1889. His father, who had been in charge of both a military academy and a hotel, had run into financial trouble and when Willis was still quite young the family was abruptly relieved from a life of relative comfort to one of real poverty. The upshot was that the young Willis left home to seek work on a cattle ranch. The life of the cowboy seemed to appeal strongly to him, and he developed at the time a love for the Mexican countryside which stayed with him for the rest of his life. On the occasions when he returned to his home his cowboy manner and talk didn't go down too well with his well-to-do family, and at thirteen he was on the move again. He returned home again when he was seventeen, and found employment with an architectural firm, and although starting as a low-

ly position, he soon worked his way up to the position of draftsman. He then went over to working for the San Francisco Daily News as a sporting cartoonist. He had become interested in boxing some time previously and used many boxing cartoons for the paper. He even advised, and won, a few boxing matches, but a single desert into an unconsciousness was enough to convince him that boxing was not for him.

Drifting on through menial jobs he finally came to work for a decorator. One day in the decorator's shop he began modelling a bust out of clay. A co-worker was doing likewise, and challenged O'Brien's bust to a sparring match with the one he had just made. At the moment of impact, the spade of creativity was struck in O'Brien's mind. Some time before (while working briefly as a guide for tourists looking for fossils in the Coast Range area) he had become interested in the prehistoric structure of the prehistoric past. And now during the leisurely evening match the interest was blossomed into the beginnings of a full-blown career. O'Brien must have realized, as he certainly remembered his clay bust, that other such clay models could have their position systematically changed and thus be animated on film as were drawn figures. He stated as first in putting the idea to the test, and since began work with a screened camera on a short, test film, shot on top of the Bank of Italy building (now the Bank of America) in San Francisco. The film consisted of a clay dinosaur and camera (the clay being modelled over skeletons made from wood), with a background of pieces of rock etc. The resultant film was shown to a fellow San Franciscan, Herman Webber, himself a producer and exhibitor, who was impressed enough to finance a \$5,000 film *The Dinosaur and the Missing Link* which was made in 1915.

Cost were the clay models, to be replaced by metal skeletons (or "anatomies" as they are called in animation circles) covered with rubber. It took O'Brien two months to complete the film, which had a running time of around five minutes. Then the problem of distribution began. O'Brien went on to complete another film, *Birds of a Feather*, and then after a year of waiting *The Dinosaur and the Missing Link* was picked up for distribution by the Edison Company for inclusion with their new programme of film packages. O'Brien's film represented the complete absence of the metal film package, and went out under the Cinecolor film package programme in 1917. But only did O'Brien have his film selected by the Edison Company, but he also landed a job with them, making a series of ten shorts in their New York studios. O'Brien did all of the work of these ten animated shorts, including building all models and miniature sets, pieces, as well as doing the camera work and lighting. He was paid \$1 per foot of finished film, and the film produced were all in the vicinity of 300 feet in length. Among the titles were: *Marathon Mike*, *Curious Pets of our Neighbors*, *E.F.D. 10,000 B.C.* and *Predators Prey*.

While some of these films were concerned with dinosaurs and humorous incidents in the lives of cartoon, others in the series featured only miniature people and modern day animals, one of these being *In the Village of the Pines*. Apart from these ten, O'Brien also worked on another series of shorts called *Mickey's Naughty Neighbors*. Most of these films have been lost over the years, but few of the shorts (*Marathon Mike*, *Predators Prey*, *The Dinosaur and the Missing Link* and *E.F.D. 10,000 B.C.*) have been unearthed and now form part of the master writer's animation collection. The animation in these films may seem crude by today's standards, but one must take into consideration that these films were being made by a man who had no good example to

are rearsideheads. In other ways the film are quite advanced, as in *Margherita Nilke* where one of the characters smokes a pipe and wags of smoke are seen coming from the bowl. The characters have facial expressions changed too. It is also interesting to note the "swinging" of the characters from *The Dinosaur and the Missing Link*, as it was to prove the feasibility of O'Brien's later and more famous creation, *King Kong*. O'Brien's sense of humor shows in the first two, both in the names of the characters ("Steampipe Steve", "Aeromarine Kookfish") and in the situations built around them. However, just when things seemed to be going well for O'Brien the Cooper production folded. This was a direct consequence of the Supreme Court decision of the Motion Picture Patents Company, which the Edison Company was a major member. As a result several of O'Brien's shorts were never to be released, although *The Dinosaur and the Missing Link* was re-released under the title *The Dinosaur and the Balloon*. He left the Edison Company in 1917, shortly before they sold their stock.

O'Brien wasn't the only one at that time who had hit upon the idea of using model animation techniques to represent prehistoric life. Herbert M. Dawley, a film producer, had been doing his own experimenting. Dawley met O'Brien in 1908 and provided him with \$1,000 for the making of *The Ghost of Stamber Mountain* which not only was one of O'Brien's original animals, but in which he also played the role of the character. The film was given a production cost of three months, and when completed was released by the World Film Corporation. It was very successful and eventually grossed \$100,000.

O'Brien, like most other film producers, was not content to go on continually producing shorts. He wanted to produce the first full-length feature film utilizing animated models. The story for this project, *Lost in the Arctic Circle*, O'Brien's *The Lost World*, originally published in 1912. After discussing the project with O'Brien, Wamozon J. Rothacker, who controlled the rights to the book, contacted First National Pictures and it was arranged that the film would be shot at their studio.

The screenplay was written by Miriam Sapiro. The story was to be produced in cooperation with the Academy of Artistic Education. Harry Gray was chosen as director. With the animal production now taken care of, it was now necessary to begin together the all-important effects crew. As soon as O'Brien came to the First National Studios he was introduced to Ralph Hammerus, who apart from running his own special effects company, had also patented the "hand-drawl." O'Brien could use the obvious similarity of using live animals in conjunction with his animated models. The story of *The Lost World* dealt with a lost jungle plateau, and he knew that much of the jungle undergrowth could be painted on glass. Hammerus was equally intrigued with O'Brien's models while the latter had brought back with him from New York and the two men spent a great deal of time together discussing the various effects that the film would call for. To complete the effects crew O'Brien recruited a model-builder who could take over the most time consuming part of the work, leaving him free to work on the many other effects problems. Miriam Delgado, whom O'Brien had met when both were students at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, came from a very poor Mexican family. O'Brien asked him if he would be interested in working to work as model-builder in *The Lost World*. Delgado, intent on a career as an artist, first refused, but after some coaxing finally gave in.

Pre-production preparation for *The Lost World* took two years, one and a half of which were spent by Delgado in perfecting techniques which eventually resulted in the construction of fifty-size model dinosaurs. O'Brien had designed the interior metal structures which were then handed

over to Delgado who constructed the padding of soft sponge rubber, and the outer flesh which was made from dental clay, a rubber similar in thickness to balloon rubber. Other refinements were the use of alcohol to soften in the extremities and chocolate powder for blood. The major model had an interior bladder filled with a red color. Therefore, after construction, Delgado bled the "look" of his creations on the paintings of dinosaurs by Charles R. Knight which hung in the Museum of Natural History in New York. To Ralph Hammerus was entrusted the task of building the miniature sets against which the models would be enacted.

Actual production on *The Lost World* was started in 1922, and took fourteen months to complete. Therefore, however, had several of the pre-production phase O'Brien's old associate, Herbert M. Dawley, had heard of the film and knew that O'Brien was working on it and using animated models. It appears that after parting company with O'Brien, Dawley had taken out a patent as the animation process, as well as on the construction of the models. Hearing of *The Lost World* project, he set about trying to have the production halted and started his litigation of suing Rothacker for \$100,000. There is no evidence of Dawley's having done any other working animation (except for one short and several pieces of film, purported to have been done by him and looking very similar to parts of *The Lost World*) and we can only assume that his patent infringement case against *The Lost World* project was merely a case of sour grapes. In any case, Dawley finally settled out of court.

During production First National decided to move to New York where the film was completed. The film opened in 1925 and was a great success, acclaimed by the critics as a technical masterpiece. The Motion Picture Daily, a trade paper, chose it as a poll as one of the year's ten best pictures.

With the success of *The Lost World* behind him, O'Brien and Ralph Hammerus set about preparing the next film, which was to have been called *Atlantis*. Some months of pre-production went into the idea, but when First National moved back to Los Angeles, the project was abandoned. O'Brien remained in New York, but returned to Los Angeles a year later. By this time he had another idea for a film, *Frankenstein*, but, as before, the film was dropped before it got off the ground.

O'Brien then went to work for R.K.O., taking Max Fleischer with him. His hopes brightened away with a project called *Cavitation*. The film was to be another prehistoric epic in which modern day men meet prehistoric monsters. Once again Delgado created the models.

A year's pre-production was to the shooting of a tremendous live animal in a strong resemblance to the settings that were to appear in *King Kong* is evident, the same heavy jungle backdrop and overall look of the pre-production artwork.

Throughout film history there has been the often-repeated case of a studio being moved from bankruptcy by a single film becoming a financial success. In this case the studio was R.K.O. and the film was *King Kong*. In 1931, David O. Selznick, who had been O'Brien's vice-president in charge of production, brought his friend Miriam C. Cooper in to reorganize the company. In doing this he had to look over those projects that were already into production, one of which was *Cavitation*. For some time Cooper had entertained the idea of producing a film that had a giant gorilla as its main attraction and had envisioned using a live gorilla. His film would feature a fight between a giant gorilla and one of the great sea dragons, the one in the work as two of them had recently been brought to the Bronx Zoo in New York. Cooper's idea was to film part of his story in Africa, then take the gorilla to Komoko to film the fight. With this in mind he approached studio magnates in New York, but could arrange no interest. He then headed for Los Angeles. Upon as-

king the *Cavitation* 1931 real he realized that O'Brien's animation efforts could make his planned gorilla film a reality. O'Brien, meanwhile, had rebuffed that *Cavitation*, his two previous projects, was going to be dropped. Thinking ahead he did an ad campaign of a giant gorilla mauling a girl and a hunter. The painting was shown to Cooper and Selznick.

As it happened Edgar Wallace, the English mystery writer, was working his way through a three month script-writing position with R.K.O. which had begun in November 1931. Cooper and Wallace worked on an early story outline for *Kong*, but Wallace died on February 10, 1932. While Cooper and Wallace had been working on the storyline, O'Brien and two studio artists, Max Laemmle and Arthur Crabtree, who had both worked with him on the *Cavitation* project, had been preparing a series of eight pre-production sketches, the first of which showed *Kong* on top of the Empire State Building. O'Brien sketched the great gorilla, Laemmle did the cities and jungles, while Crabtree drew the sky. Armed with these sketches and the story outline, Cooper went to see Selznick, who was convinced that no one else could make the New York concept. They had decided as to whether the film could be made to look as realistic as Cooper seemed to think it could. In the end they agreed to the making of a demonstration reel to be used at a later sales meeting. Cooper knew that the failure of the project would seriously on the success or failure of the test reel, and so was determined to make it as spectacular as possible. Cooper and his team set to work with zeal, and some months later the reel was completed, with Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong and Bruce Cabot leading the star list. The reel opened with some of the characters being chased by a Triceratops. They ran into a giant log bringing a monster *Kong* stands at the other end of the log, and poking the red up, he begins to shake it viciously. One by one the animals are thrown to the ground, to the bottom of the ravine, where the survivors are eaten alive by monstrous reptiles and giant spiders.

The other sequence in the demonstration footage depicted *Kong's* fight with the *Allosaurus*. Miriam C. Cooper comments unanimously on this sequence: "The first shot R.K.O. ever made as true-production is as *Kong*, it's where Fay is on top of the first and the *Allosaurus* comes in. That shot took as three days, because none of us knew how to do it. We used the first re-enactment sequence, which is the reverse of re-enactment. We re-enacted it for *King Kong*. I didn't pretend it, I was a damn fool. Nobody pretended at Public Domain. But nobody knows how to use it, they've used a number of times - maybe Harryhausen's horse time when the reel was shown at the sales meeting. It was a smash hit, and the executives immediately authorized continuation of the project."

Before the film could go into major production, however, Cooper had one more problem as his hands. It seems that the executives wanted the film to begin on *Kong's* island. Cooper didn't agree to this. He wanted a long, slow build-up that would make *Kong's* initial appearance more spectacular and set the scene for the rest of the movie. In a very real sense, after many months of bargaining, Cooper finally won his point and the film was under way.

THE PRODUCTION Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong and Bruce Cabot were brought in again as the main stars, with Frank Reicher, Sam Hardy, Noble Johnson, James Hopes, Steve Clements and Victor Wong as their supporting players. The story was written by Cooper and Wallace but written by James Creelman, Ruth Roser (Mrs. Ernest B. Schoedkopf) drafted many scripts before the final shooting script was drafted upon. Even so, the film was a long way into production before that happened. Some time later, Miriam C. Cooper, using her maiden name of Delius W. Lovelace, wrote a 200 page book of the

story which is quite a collector's item today.

Mervyn C. Cooper and his old associate Ernest R. Schoedack both took on the job of directing *King*. Cooper handled the studio work. The entire village, backed by the huge wall and an immense gate (built originally for Cecil B. DeMille's *King of Kings* in 1925) was shot on the back lot at R.K.O.'s Culver City studio, while nearly all of the other jungle footage was shot at the more R.K.O. studio in Goleta Street (Los Angeles), now occupied by Paramount.

Schoedack directed the location footage, including that of the stream where *King* is put on display. This was shot at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles in one day. Other scenes shot by Schoedack were of the Empire State Building. Finding that the steam pilots employed for this work few new for camera too fast, Schoedack went up in a plane himself to illustrate to them how to fly the action to the medium. He also handled the scenes of the ship, *The Venture*, in San Pedro Harbor. The live action photography was handled by Edward Leland. Art Direction was by Al Herman and Carroll Shepherd, the latter notoriously laud as Carroll Clark as *Citizen Kane*'s look, "Horror Movies, An Illustrated Survey."

Murray Spivack was in charge of the sound effects, a job not to be envied as Spivack and his crew had to come up with original sounds for all of the prehistoric animals. This was something that had never previously been called for from any sound effects department, the major problem being that no sounds would be easily recognizable. *King's* roar was finally made by joining the roar of a lion by one octave, and then recording it backwards at a slower speed.

The music used for *King* is most appropriate, and the credit for it must go to its creator, Max Steiner. Regarded among Steiner's personal favorites, this was one of the very first all-original scores written for a motion picture, and complements the action superbly.

While *King* was being filmed, R.K.O. were also shooting *The Most Dangerous Game*, which not only used the same producer, Cooper, one of the same directors, Schoedack, and the same leading lady, Fay Wray, but also made extensive use of the same jungle sets, including the giant log which bridges the stream. Schoedack would be filming *The Most Dangerous Game* during the day, while Cooper would use the same sets at night to film *King*.

THE EFFECTS Obviously, the real star of the film was *King* himself. Much that is misleading has been written about both the film and the effects used. It has been said, for example, that there were at least six animation models of *King* himself, but this is incorrect. Early in the pre-production Cooper had his effects staff working around a dozen prototypes of *King* and from these one was chosen. As in the earlier films *O'Brien* once again designed the metal armatures, of which two were built. Each one stood eighteen inches high and weighed almost ten pounds. When completed they were handed over to Mitzel Delgado who, using the original clay-molded prototype as a guide to the bodily proportions, covered the armatures with velvet padding which was woven around the armature in such a way as to make the animal areas less noticeable. Over the padding he applied liquid latex rubber, the general technique being much the same as that used for the models in the earlier *The Lost World*. Over the outer latex skin he glued rabbit fur. Delgado built all the other prehistoric animals used in the film, including the *Procomodon* which attempts to carry off Fay Wray, the beautifully reptilian *Allosaurus*, the *Bromasaurus* and the *Stegosaurus*. As in *The Lost World*, Delgado fitted some of these models with rubber bladder breathing mechanisms, one of which is used in the *Stegosaurus* model, and is seen in action while that creature is dying after being shot by "Carl DeBont's" men. The pieces on the *Stegosaurus'* back were carved from Indian wood.



The missing link creature from O. Bohn's 1915 short, *THE DINOSAUR AND THE MISSING LINK*



A Bohn mold-up of one of KING BOHN's original sets, which shows Kong holding a screaming man in his mouth

Apart from the animation models of primitive animals, Delgado also built various models, appropriately scaled, of several of the actors and one of Fay Wray. In *King Kong*, Wray's car was built so that scenes could be shot of the Kong model holding her in his paw, as he does throughout the film. In other cases models of humans were used in situations where it would have been physically impossible to use a live actor. The scene, for example, in which Fay Wray and Bruce Cabot fight at the end of a rope while trying to escape from Kong's clutches is no last was made by using two miniature animated models.

With the help of his brother Victor, Delgado also built several full-size body pieces, such as Kong's hand and arm, his foot, the Pteranodon's claw, and a full-sized bust of Kong, which was used for some of the close-up shots as well as those that showed Kong with a squirming actor in his mouth. This huge bust had a three-foot foot-elf, a face six, and a half-foot wide, ten-inch tooth and was a foot long. The bust was operated by eighty-five cameras, operated by six men huddled inside it, and was covered with thirty, forty, or fifty-one bear hides, depending on whose account you prefer to accept. The full size paw was used when closeups of Fay Wray, in Kong's paw, had to be shown. Here Miss Wray comments in her eulogy while filming the sequence: "The hand and arm in which my close-up scenes were made was about eight feet in length. Inside the furry arm, there was a wood bar and the whole construction (with me in the hand) could be raised or lowered like a crane. The fingers would be pressed around my wrist while I was in a standing position. I would then be raised about ten feet into the air in the open hand, his fingers would gradually loosen and begin to open. My face was real as I grabbed onto his wrist, his thumb, whenever I could, to keep from slipping out of his grip! When I could sense that the moment of maximum safety had arrived I would call implacably to the director and ask to be lowered to the floor of the stage. Happily this was never denied for a second two long! I would have a few moments' rest, be reassured in the paw and then the ordeal would begin all over again... a kind of pteranodon torment!"

The *Last World* had been a good bargain, a *Blockbuster*, for O'Brien, but the work on *King Kong* was far more complex. He set up his models in what has been described as a "reality sandwich." In the background a pre-lit piece of set was rear-projected onto a screen which in front of the screen a sheet of glass was placed with sections of jungle undergrowth painted on it by Byron Crabtree and Marie Lammage. In front of the glass was positioned a table, about twice the size of the average dining-room table, for the animation models to perform on. In front of this table was yet another sheet of glass with more undergrowth painted on it. By thus having each of the background and foreground on glass sheets, O'Brien was able to create a larger than life jungle.

There is one sequence in *King Kong* where the gorilla, picking up Fay Wray in his hand and issuing by her throat, begins to get them off *King Kong* this is the scene, puzzled by the sound she is making. This scene was made by first filming Fay Wray alone, while invisible wires pulled her clothes away from her. This footage was then rear-projected. One of the animation model gorillas was then placed in front of the rear screen, and his movements animated to correspond with the action on the screen, frame by painstaking frame. The live action element in this sequence is said to have taken nearly three hours to film.

King Kong set new records in special effects, with some scenes appearing as crisp as movie pictures simultaneously. For months, O'Brien and his animation assistant, Buzz Offman, cranked into the many models O'Brien described the work. "It was a good day's work when I wound up with twenty-five feet of action on film, because *King* and the other models had to be separately



Behind the scenes look at production of *KING KONG* (1933). Seen here is Maxine C. Cooper's team shooting a sequence involving the movie village and giant giant.

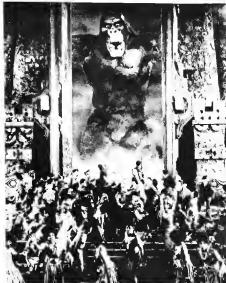
photographed every time their position was changed a distance of an inch. And we worked ten hours a day!" Even with these long working hours it still took O'Brien seven weeks to maintain the fight between Kong and the Pteranodon.

But O'Brien was more than just an animator. He realized "character" was the models, gave them a personality all their own. He added little touches such as the Allomene something in one something that was not called for by the story but which added extra strength to the animated illusion. When animating a model, the animator has to act out the part of the particular creature he is animating, in order to get the natural movements. And so Kong's character clearly reflects certain aspects of O'Brien's personality. These movements, for example, with which Kong swings so easily (especially in his death scene) are the work of a great crane, displayed via the animated model.

SEQUENCES DELETED FROM KONG: *King Kong* was actually in production for fifty-five weeks, and cost \$4,500,000 to produce. As is usual a number of sequences either were not used or were used in a altered form. The sequence

completed in the last reel, where Carl Denham's men are shaken from the log, remained in the final theatrical print of *King Kong*, although without the portion showing the fate of the men once they hit the bottom of the ravine. Contrary to some opinions, this portion was not deleted because of its horrific content. Both Cooper and Schoenback thought that the portion showed the genius of the film, and so decided to leave it out. Shortly after the film's release the first of many small cuts was made. That was the sequence where Kong picks away Fay Wray's clothes. Other scenes, all thought lost for some reason or another, were cut out over the years by anxious studios to let people know their blue pencils were well sharpened. These include various scenes of Kong chasing up columns, and a scene in which Kong is looking for Fay Wray after his escape from the New York disaster. In a high on a building, looks in a window, and seeing a girl he thinks is Fay he pulls her out through the window. Discovering his mistake he casually spurs his fingers and she falls many stories to her death on the pavement below. Even up until 1952, connoisseurs' editions were still snipping away.

In October 1973, while in New York (courtesy,



Kong marches through the giant gate, and bursts into the cinema village. The scene means little to the moviegoers as the production still expects.

of the Film and Television School) to study the techniques and history of model animation, I discovered a passionately unknown fact concerning these overseas scenes. It was thought for many years that the deleted scenes had been discarded and thus lost forever. In passing on this story, all of which is true, quite true, I must, unfortunately, refrain from naming names, to protect the guilty as it were. It seems that Person A, one day while unscripting through reels that found a certain roll which he immediately felt was a Kong (Gorilla) recognized as the missing scenes. Taking it under his arm he ran to tell person B (also a Kong fanatic) of his wondrous discovery. Together they plotted to have a lab make two meters millimeter reduction prints, one for each of them. How lucky they would be, the only Kong-fans in the world with the removed scenes, which they could sell into their own nation millimeter prints of Kong; which are available through many "private" suppliers throughout the U.S.A. So off they went to the lab. What they didn't realize was that the owner of the lab was a King fanatic too, with his own sixteen millimeter print of Kong. Mr A and Mr B got their prints, but what they didn't realize, until sometime later, was that the lab owner had

made a duplicate; and being a business man he quickly established a thriving trade selling off other duplicate sets to other Kong-print supporters. The result is that there are today many prints of King Kong available, lovely prints, with hand-drawn perspective claps of the removed scenes in them, though a good print can still be obtained if you know the right people.

THE MODELS. Readers wonder what became of the models used in *Kong*. Over the past few years sleep-eyed Kong-fans may have noticed in some overseas publications various articles about people purporting to own the original, or one of the original King Kong models, and showing in some cases that their models were still fairly well-preserved. The article would normally include a photo of the proud owner holding his prized model; each claimant are completely without foundation. Of the two actual King Kong models built for the film, only one survives. This one model, now only a bare anatomy, and in a glass case in the Museum of the City of the Stars and Pinex of Pinex Museum, in Buena Park, an outer suburb of Los Angeles. The museum does not own the sculpture which is an permanent loan from the man who does own it, but as before I don't name names.

The other remains went in many different directions in just as many parts over the years; in other words it was demolished. Of the many different dinosaur models used in the film, those which have survived are for the most part owned by the editor of *Famous Monsters Of Filmland* magazine, Mr Forrest J. Ackerman, of Los Angeles. Today they are in very poor condition, although continuing attempts are being made to restore them.

While on the subject of old models, the models used in O'Brien's *The Lost World* were donated to the Museum of Arts and Sciences at Exposition Park in Los Angeles where they were on display for many years until the rubber began to deteriorate and disintegrate. They were then saved away, and years later, when a new wing was added to the museum, the remains of the models were accidentally sealed between walls. Investigating this story last year I got nowhere when asking why these valuable relics weren't exhibited if people knew where they were. I later heard that a certain gentleman, with a lot more money than I've got, had had the models removed to his own collection. Recently Mr Forrest J. Ackerman reported to me that he had discovered the remains of a model which he strongly believed to be the Brontosaurus model from *The Lost World*.

THE RELEASE OF KONG: King Kong premiered at Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Blvd. on the Friday evening of March 24, 1933. The front courtyard of the theatre was filled with people, flags, statue heads, plus the full-size Kong suit. Before the screening began, a special stage event entitled *Scene In The Jungle* was staged by Hal Roemer. The film was released simultaneously all over the U.S.A.

Over the nation, moviegoers heard days worth "King Kong is coming! A Monster! All-Powerful! Biting down all weapons, Smashing all humans! You won't believe your eyes! How he comes! Look out!" There followed the sound of what seemed like a thousand bull-apes roaring in unison.

King Kong is the only film to ever play simultaneously at both the RKO Theatre and the Radio City Music Hall, then the two biggest theatres in the world. It is reported that the theatres were packed to capacity. Ten thousand seats, every minute full, ten minutes daily. When Kong was released in London on Easter Sunday, 1933, twelve thousand people had to be turned away. The American critics raved. One said: "King Kong is the most spectacular motion picture, from a photographic standpoint, ever presented out of a movie-camera." The editors of *Sensational Magazine* said: "Gaudily taking, mesmerizing. Words are inadequate to express the thrill and cannot do justice to the value of the absorbing product of dauntless and imaginative genius." "The ultimate in mystery-movie-making," and *Referee* Martin "A triumph of the bizarre," and another reviewer, Harrison Carroll. And producer Lloyd Arthur Newberry accurately prophesied: "So great is its impact that I estimate to predict that it will not be forgotten even in 1960 — destined to become a living legend, part and parcel of America's folklore like the lightning forked-tongued monster, and the lightning lightning vapors, dinosaurs."

A quarter of a century after his creation, King Kong was released in television in New York. So great was the demand for Kong by a new generation, that the film was screened no less than sixteen hours during a single seven day period. King Kong, though he has died a thousand times, a slave and wild and brave in the hearts of millions of film-lovers the world over, monopolized into his, breathed into life, by the imagination and talented hands of Willis H. O'Brien, the Father of Kong. *

Alan O'Brien is a special effects animator currently working at the Twentieth Film Laboratories.



The famous line of actors from **SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS** poses. The Christian led to crucifixion (left) and another (right), or jump into the burning hell.

A scene from Raymond Langford's play about **The Redemptive Work**. The statue in this scene (see Little Light in Quaker's Magazine) and playing Quaker's "Men" and is "The River" — Arthur Trenchard.





THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG: A building in Melbourne, Victoria, houses the famous Glenville Hotel.

Towards an Australian Film Archive

In January 1971 I resigned from my tutoring job at La Trobe University, shipped my VW 1200 to Venezuela and started a nine-month drive around South America from Caracas to Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego, and from there to Buenos Aires through the Argentine pampas to Belen where I shipped the car to Portugal.

I went as a tourist, but also a film historian, and I made a point of interesting myself in the film of such popular & popular through.

The first national Cinematheque I visited was in Caracas, a place where the country's films are preserved and information disseminated about films in general. Here I spoke in broken Spanish with the kind director Rodolfo Isaza for over an hour about cinematheques between Australian and Venezuelan film history. You'd be surprised how much we have in common, and I was impressed at the great friendship of this director, that was to be echoed so often in South America among the film history — truly a new international community along the lines of medieval Latin scholars united by a *lingua franca* — film. He showed me at many Venezuelan films as they had. He also showed me Cuban films that up till then we had never seen in Australia. He introduced me to my very good friend Jacobo Bonaldi, who I found was my opposite number in Venezuela. He too was compiling a definitive history of Venezuela's film production. A 60-year-old Rumanian Jew, who could speak eight languages and who taught English for a living, but really lived for film, Jacobo was as courteous as any man I have met. He arranged meetings with Venezuelan film-makers across the spectrum from left to right. From self-styled communists (film-makers who argued as that "film must Revolution in South America") and who were making films up in the slums above Caracas where pigs wandered the streets and bare boys knew to sit unattended babies — to the bourgeois film-makers making neo-fascist fantasies along European film lines. I was well received by all, and all gave me addresses of their opposite numbers further down the line in Peru, Chile and so on.

In this way, I passed from Cinematheque to Cinematheque, enjoying the country's films, learning lessons useful for Australia in terms of American cultural imperialism and the difficulties of local producers everywhere in getting their films on national screens. I also had a good time. The Santiago and Buenos Aires Cinematheques were probably the best set up. Especially the

Buenos Aires one where they had people filing information about the world's films — including something on Australia. The Argentinians of course have their own grand film history. The Cinematheque in Rio de Janeiro was also impressive, but it was the people who struck me and the value of these places which was optimistic and full of surprises. They were happy people doing an important job.

The point I want to make here is that in every South American country I visited and they had a copy of *The Sentimental Bloke* in Montevideo, and their audiences loved it no matter how small the country or how poor, cinema could always direct me to their Cinematheque. A building on its own, although graced with other cultural facilities as in Quito, Ecuador, but with its own personnel and its own reason of being. When I returned to Australia and asked where was the Australian Cinematheque, I was told there was something vaguely referred to as a "film collection" that was held within another building — a library — as if film was merely another matter of information retrieval.

Many people in Australia believe that the time is now ripe for an Australian Film Archive (or Cinematheque) to be established, independent from any other institution, although having close links with the National Film School, the National Library, the National Film Theatre and other organisations.

Such a Cinematheque would be responsible in size and function to preserve film cinema and would have responsibility for supplying historically significant films, and film information, and be a central power-house for the dissemination of such films, and film information for cultural and educational purposes.

Everywhere today it is acknowledged that film is a powerful medium for expressing national character, and one of the best forms of re-creating a nation's past events and culture because of the unique nature of the medium. Yet, Australian film has been lost forever for future generations (e.g. *The True Story of the Kelly Gang* 1936) and at this very moment, film and video tapes are being destroyed because of lack of money and facilities to preserve them.

Historically, film preservation and film study in this country is almost one unimagined tragedy that may not be allowed to continue. The story has always been one of typical conservatism, timidity and preservation.

Even in early in 1937, some enlightened

observers were aware of the need for a separate Commonwealth Film Library, which if it had been established then would mean that all cinema today could see such films as *Soldiers of the Cross* 1930 and *The True Story of the Kelly Gang* 1936, besides a host of other documentaries recording our heritage.

For example, Walter Marks, the Chairman of the 1937 Royal Commission into the Motion Picture Industry of Australia asked the chief censor (Censor) O'Reilly on Tuesday 19th April:

"Would you advocate the establishment of a Commonwealth Film Library?" (Minutes of Evidence, p.931, 34303).

O'Reilly who can be seen as a rather limited bureaucrat whose life's work in the Australian film industry was on balance a negative, conservative one, replied:

"I do not think this is necessary. If the demand made itself manifest, commercial people would make it."

Since the establishment of the Film Collection within the National Library after World War Two, an immense amount of defunct work has been accomplished — mostly by creative, far-sighted individuals — who, while working within a library framework, were able to the need to preserve our film idiom.

It was an understandable step to place the embryo film archive within the national library when it was first set up, but this is no longer a functional idea. Film and books require different systems for their storage, cataloguing and dissemination to scholars and the public. It is possible that the needs of one might inhibit the needs of the other. More importantly, it is clear that film is a very special cultural medium and requires special conditions for its development. A Film archive needs to be on its own — it cannot be part of a larger whole. The film archive must be an independent authority (perhaps included within the Prime Minister's Department) and be strategically placed in Sydney close to the commercial centre of cinema in Australia and the National Film School.

Every day that goes past before this principle is adopted means that students of film and film-makers in Australia are the poorer because there is no single organisation devoted solely to the care of their unique art form.

Ross Cooper

Ross Cooper is a film historian currently lecturing at Monash University.



A PRIVATE COLLECTION

When we arrived at Harry Davidson's home in the Melbourne suburb of Ivanhoe he had just returned from one of his frequent film scavenging trips to the country, this time investigating an old cinema at Yackandandah. A friendly, genial man of 43, with a delightful faculty for anecdotes, Davidson has devoted much of his life to the collection of films and cinema bric-a-brac such as 35 mm projectors, posters, paper mache masks, and photographs. His cluttered house is a collector's paradise, the culmination of a hobby which began with films purchased over-the-counter during the War while he was still at school. Today it is a major collection of well over one million feet of film. Amongst the stacks of rustling cans are the only surviving prints of many

Australian and overseas silent films. But it is a hazardous collection; most of the films are on nitrate stock and an accident could destroy the prints of many silent classics. Seated amongst these films Davidson told us about his career as a collector of "movie antiquity". Apart from providing insights into the motives of a film collector, Davidson reminded us of something more important: His collection is of inestimable value to a study of the cinema, as well as being of considerable historical and cultural importance. As such it must be preserved. More now than ever before the necessity for an adequately financed and competently staffed film archive in Australia to accommodate and document such collections was made immediately and urgently apparent.

Exactly where or when Harry Davidson developed his interest in films is difficult to discover. He tells a story that as a young boy during the 1930's he became fascinated by toy film projectors in shop windows, and practically anything else to do with the cinema. This was in spite of his father's attitude toward the young collector which was to discourage any interest in either film or radio.

I was always told off by my father. He would come home when *The Search for the Golden Bismarck* was on at a quarter past six, walk up and turn it off and say, "Get rid of that now!" It's funny, but my father hated films, just the thought of it was stupid and he couldn't understand why I was even vaguely interested in it.

Davidson, however, pursued his interest which gradually began to assume the appearance of something more obsessive than a mere hobby. His life began to become increasingly centered round film. With his mother and brother he went to the cinema about twice a month, while he read such writings as *Film Fun*, and arranged slide shows at home for his friends. Although he describes himself as being "just a moviegoer", during this period film was gradually dominating his life.

I just liked it. An aunt of mine had a projector

at home that she had bought for her nephew. Whenever he used to go to her place he'd show films for him. I knew she had this and so whenever I went there I'd beg and plead and ask if she'd show some films. She never did and I finally she put something on for me to stop me whining and carrying on.

Remembering his experiences at school Davidson told us how his fascination with celluloid was unattainable and obsessive:

I forget how it came about but I acquired almost six inches of an old silent film. I was in third grade at the time. The teacher said, "Come on Davidson, what've you got there?" I said, "Nothing". She said, "Bring it on!" I said, "No!" "Bring it on!" "No!"

She finally came down and grabbed both my hands and said, "Give it to me!" But I still wouldn't part with it. Every now and again I used to hold it up against the window. I could see figures, some blobs in an Arab's outfit with a girl under his arm. Well she said, "Give it to me!" and he'd see round the legs. I must have

copied a dame class and I still don't part with it.

His determination to keep films went unheeded. In the late 1930s and early 1940s Myers and Tim the Topcats sold films for 1/6 to be used on toy projectors. By saving his money and buying a rod at a time Davidson finally collected his first film, *Georgette Heilmann*. "It was nothing to do with the Georgette at all", he eventually discovered, "it was just a bloke and a bird having a row and he clattered her out".

While still at school he bought his first projector for ten shillings from a fellow student. The films he had collected were shown at home, at social occasions attended by friends and anyone else who was interested.

Despite his father's objections, Davidson was determined to enter the film industry and eventually found employment as an assistant projectionist. Davidson made many friends within the industry, including *Prize Well*. Well had an old Pathé silent projector in good running order and some old silent film. Davidson bought the lot for twenty-five pounds. It was his first fully commercial projector. He could now show 35 mm feature films at home.

The philosophy, and indeed the psychology, of

the collector is an individual to observe in person, as it is almost a cliché to say or assume. When asked why he collects films he is adamant that an album should be placed on his list of films and not a limited effort to retain reels of celluloid.

I just like film. I regard it as a sort of living history — you can see people who are long gone re-living again. It's something that no other medium can do.

Collecting films can also be described as a rather unique hobby.

It's individual. Not many people do it, not many people can do it because there's such a limited supply around. Everything that everyone else goes for I'm just not interested in. I've been described as eccentric, but I don't think I am. Anyway, how do you know?

The nature of the film collector's modest obsession lends an insight into the contrasting personalities who passionately pursue the hobby. Before the introduction of television there was at the most a dozen such people scattered round the suburbs of Melbourne forming a type of informal club. Every Sunday night they would meet together and show their films — many of the Efler productions, cartoons, and newsreels. These nights were available to these collectors, both for their entertainment value as well as providing an opportunity to widen their knowledge of possible future sources.

The film collector goes about his task like a detective. Using an old 1911 copy of a *Film Weekly* yearbook listing cinemas and names of the exhibitors which he always carries in his car, Davidson tries to find the name of the town and the exhibitor's name. Usually the exhibitor lived in the town and is still living there in retirement. We look him up in the telephone book, call round to his home and introduce himself. Some are willing to lend over the films in their possession. Others, as Davidson says, "send the old girl" and begin bargaining. Either way a lot of Davidson's collection has been accumulated in this manner. He also follows up references of old cars in dilapidated garages, and bargains with hitherto unknown film collectors further afield. It took eleven years of bargaining with the former director of the U.F.A. film library in North Australia before Davidson was able to buy original prints of the German silent cinema Star Line's *Matrosen* (1926) and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Faust* (1926). These, along with a film of Frank Thring Star's speech at the opening night of *Silence Films* in 1930 are among his most treasured possessions.

The individualistic spirit which is a recurrent trait amongst film collectors in Australia indicates a variable cleavage within surrounding the hobby. This preoccupation is few and the degree of indulgence depends both a sort for business as well as the skill of a diplomat. Initially collectors can be wary and suspicious of each other, as Davidson explained in describing a meeting with a "film nut" in Burnie, Tasmania.

I'd heard about this chap from a fellow who collected film machinery. He gave me his address, described him, and gave me a letter of introduction. He also warned me about him saying that he was — well, what's the word? — eccentric to the point of madness. "If you get on the right side of him it will be all right." So I went down there and knocked on the door. There was no sign of life, except for a couple of dozen bird cages crissed out of banana boxes with pigeons and trows and I don't know what in there — he collected birds too! And looking through his front window into his lounge room I could see a projector. It was aimed through the window out onto his front lawn, and I could see the frame where he hung the screen! Well I hung around there for a while but there was still no sign of him. I asked the fellow who



above: Frank Thring giving a speech — as film — at the opening of Efler Productions in the Matrosen Theatre, Melbourne 1930. This short was screened before the premiere of Thring's *Matrosen*. Above his speech he introduced Ray Fisher (below left) as an up and coming young screen writer he hoped would become a star of the future.

lived next door where he was and he said, "He wears a tweed coat and should be sitting down outside the post office. He's generally down there in the morning talking to his old man." So I went down and there's a couple of things sitting there and I asked them if they want him and they said "No." So I drove round for an hour or so, then I saw a chap walking down towards that area and I thought, "Well, he's got a tweed coat." He didn't look quite so old as I imagined him to be, judging by the way the other people had described him. He went down and on outside the post office. I went up to him and said, "I'm looking for Mr. Davidson, would you happen to be him?" He looked up and said, "Would you know him if you saw him?" and I said, "No, I've had him described to me. How old he'll be wearing a tweed coat and be sitting down here around about this time. If you are him we've got something in common."

He said, "Well, what could you have in common?"

I said, "I happen to be a collector of silent films."

"Silent films?" he said, "Oh, yeah I happen to have heard of those." I said, "Oh, well, if you're his Davidson and since we have something in common we can talk it over."

He said, "What would you know about silent films?" I said, "I know a fair bit about them, I've been showing them for years and I've collected a lot of them. I believe this chap has got a lot too. Maybe we can talk it over and swap a few."

He looked me over and said, "Know anything about anatomy?"

I said, "I've got a few machines, some Kalmes, Edison and Super Dendrographs."

He looked me over again and then he said, "I'm Davidson. You said I talk the most language, water" and he put his hand out and shook and I said, "Look, I've got a letter of introduction from two, from Ben Davis. It might make things look a bit more formal." He took it and said it over. Then he said, "Well, my friend of Ben's is a friend of mine."

It was over so fast that on I went back to his place that night and saw his old machines, showed the films he had, and saw how he collected them. I gave up films which would come in," he said. "Sound's no good, a film's got to be silent." He was a professional right up until sound came in, then he gave it away. Now he just runs the silent films to himself. He sits up having a meal with the machine running, peering through his living room, and the window, across the verandah, and onto the screen behind the bridge. When I saw that I had a heavy feeling and I wondered if this was going to be my destiny, sitting there forever watching old films.

Over collected much more to be done. It is at this point that the film collector needs finance to acquire, preserve, and store his collection for screening. Davidson is particularly interested in the aspect of "the collector's business" as he phrases it. Although his home is indeed "a house full of film and moving antiquity" a close inspection reveals that there is a large amount of antiquity. Yet he emphasizes that the state of his collection at the moment is not all desirable. With adequate finance he could pursue a far more systematic course.

The best thing to do to improve my set up would be to look round for the right location, preferably a drained factory built of brick where there's plenty of space. I could set up racks, go through the films and put them in each particular category: Australian Silent, Australian Sound, Overseas Silent, Overseas Sound, then Shorts, Cartoons, different silent film then put them all down in a thorough list and repeat them. When I begin a new film I also make a half-price list rather than overlap the speakers holes. I find that when you put a half-price mark it halves the shrinkage as the speakers when it goes through the machine, so

that you don't have any trouble with it. I would advise them like that so I could put my hand on such particular things, and then start to contact other film archives throughout the world, tell them what I've got, find out what they've got of ours and try to work a swapping arrangement where everyone's satisfied. If a film's made in France or England in 1918 and they haven't got a copy, well we could work an arrangement where they'd get a copy of it.

As a practicing projectionist Davidson regards the meaning of the film as a vital part of the art of collecting. He feels that the film should be shown under the best possible conditions. An original print of a 35 mm colour duplicate is mandatory because the original facts are retained. "Black and white film was an invention of the talkies era," he explains.

In one particular scene of Vaughan Marshall's *Reinhardt* made in 1927 this day is delivering a painting to a house in the middle of the day. The scene is quite lively, the clock and bureau all. You start to see the owner of the house open the door and there's the painting. Now in the original print that whole scene was dark blue and you knew it was night-time. In the copy they've got now in Canberra, and in any other copies that will exist from now on, you see him there and it's obviously in the daytime and people look at that and wonder, "That's not the night, it's the middle of the day." Of course it was, but it was never shown like that.

Furthermore, although films did not talk they were never shown silent. Even remote country cinemas could provide a genuine film could improve appreciable music in the film being shown. Cinema in the cities could frequently recruit entire orchestras and sound effects men. When Davidson screens his films at home he always plays suitable recorded music.

I saw a bad film copy of *Murdoch's Feast*, which I've got an original 35mm print of. Now I can tell here, naturalistic, the right music behind it, the dialogue, background, and everything — especially the part where *Feast* provokes the Devil at the monastery. There I play the music out of *Feast*, *The Night on Bald Mountain*, and it fits in beautifully. I saw the same film being screened at the Melbourne University to I'd say every part of two hundred students. It was on film, in black and white, dead silent! It just wasn't the same picture. If these two hundred odd students saw that film, and they'd read the write-ups on *Feast* — and there's only good write-ups on it — they'd wonder what in the hell are people talking about. How could they enjoy the stuff? But they didn't see *Feast*. They saw a bad copy, silent. That just wasn't the way it was meant to be, it wasn't like that.

Finally, it is also necessary that the film be shown at standard speed. At 24 fps the original sense of timing is thrown completely away.

Davidson's concern for the art of presentation is particularly evident of his love for film. It is a creative, intellectual, and informative experience to attend his screenings if it is an experience that is enjoyed by too few people in Australia today — especially those whose appreciation of the cinema of the early years of the century is derived from seeing films in a artificial and inherently absurd situation in a silent cinema in black and white. Davidson sees appropriate presentation as one of the principle roles of a National Film Archive. It is only from viewing a carefully screened screen and it is not originally planned that a audience can derive the greatest satisfaction from the "Silent Film".

Because of the way these films are discussed, and the fact that every film, although lost, are still owned by those people who hold the rights, there arises the delicate and legally sensitive question regarding the copyright law. Davidson's at-

titude to this problem is straightforward and in many respects quite sensible.

If a man makes a film he owns that film. But a lot of the films that I've got were sold across the counter — particularly the two minute lenses. They were sold at one penny a foot to the exhibitor and he was allowed to run them whenever he liked, it was his property. The idea of the film corporation then was that they called themselves "film manufacturers". They manufactured the film and they sold it at as much as a foot and it was up to the exhibitor to put his money back from that. I don't think that anyone should carry on with our groups if a film that was presumably lost suddenly turns up. The man who found it should be recognized for it. I don't think people should hand him a piece of paper and carry on saying, "This is ours". They should be happy that the film exists.

Naturally people have copyright laws still exist and they should about copyright laws still exist of old film in need, both for the producers of the film collectors and the original holders of film rights.

In addition to the legal aspects of film collection, two more problems arise as the number of films held by a collector increases. Storage is a perpetual dilemma. Ideally all film should be stored in a fireproof vault at a constant moderate temperature and humidity. Since such a chamber is beyond the resources of most film collectors, and even there is no central film archive established to which collectors can send their irreplaceable film, storage is carried out on an individual ad hoc basis. At Davidson explained, some people, for some as yet undefined reason, wrap their films in newspaper. There is also a collector in Cardiff who loads his films under the pavilion roof of his house and never screens them.

They all have different methods. I like to put mine on spools in a tank and label them. Others will put them in a tin and cut them every inch and measure for first run viewing. I've got original prints of early French Pathé attraction films, which were made to clear the French vaudeville houses, that go back to the core of the century. I can still screen them now. There's no sign of decomposition — they've shrunk a little, but they still run all right. And get other stuff which was made in the late twenties is gone. I've had to throw it out. I think a lot of it depends on the original work, how much of the tape, they left in it to start with. I'm sure it's decomposition, but I'm sure it's got a lot to do with the original processing. Various companies differed in the attraction films gave to processing. The *Elissa* attraction, which was all done by hand, all rack and tank development, is still surprisingly good, no problems at all. Yet there was a batch of *Claude Rains* newsreels floating round for a while that had been made during the war and they're all turned brown. Obviously *Claude Rains* had someone who tried to speed up working — but that was just one particular batch. Also, some old silent films were tinted various colours for particular scenes, those that are turned blue have decomposed to a greater extent than those which were transparent.

With little standardization of storage procedures amongst the many private film collectors, the future of unprocessed prints, "lenses" for posterity by an individual film collector, is still a precarious one. This is not necessarily due to any actual malpractice of the film on the part of the collector, but to the nature of the old silent film stock itself. Nitrate film can deteriorate to a point where it becomes explosive. It can also decompose into a sticky, viscous glue, or dry into powder. These are extreme states of decomposition. More commonplace is the fading of the emulsion. In this respect the age of the film is not always as reliable as the degree of decomposition.

fixed, say, amber.

The decomposition of nitrate film does pose a potential hazard for film collectors. It can be recognized by rust marks on the tin, an infidelity of the red, granules of a honey-like substance either on the lid of the tin or coming out the side of the red. Nitrate film in any of these conditions is highly inflammable. If the process of decomposition has not gone too far the film can still be saved by duplicating into three layer negative stock. However, for collectors with limited financial resources, this is the point where the film may be lost. In most cases they are not copied and the film continues to deteriorate. A print of an early Charlie Chaplin production, *His Day*, bought by Davidson at \$600 has, been instead in \$600 but at various scenes gradually become unusable.

The ultimate tragedy for a film collector is the actual destruction of an entire collection by fire. This has happened previously to Davidson. He arrived home from work one day during 1966 to find his house and collection a smouldering ruin from a fire which was presumably deliberately lit. Many early J. C. Williamson original prints were destroyed, as well as a Lubin Company film *Seeds in Bushes* (1906) and the only print of an American film *The Way to a Man's Heart* (1912).

The loss of many valuable films from the early years of Australian film-making has occurred more frequently through the ignorance of people with access to these "old film cans" long before a collector has heard of their existence. This was the fate of the only surviving print of *Jessie Hughes* (1916) starring Lottie Lovey and owned by her.

There was a copy of this early Australian classic in the projection room of the Victory Theatre in St. Johns for years — ever since it was made. A present day projectionist was then seeing *Screen News* at the theatre. He went to the operator and said, "Have you got any old film?" "Yeah," and the operator, "we've got that old thing up here, you can have that. What do you want it for?" "Well," he said, "I want to make short-bursts out of it." So he gave him the keys and the guy proceeded to chop it up into 16 foot lengths, wrap it in paper, set fire to it, bring on it, and watch the smoke go up. I said to him, "How do you know it was *Jessie Hughes*?" "Oh it was *Jessie Hughes*, all right," he said, "it was on the tin and on the labels and everything." I said, "was it a good print?" He said, "ah yeah, it was beautiful."

Films can be stolen. Davidson once possessed a *Virginia Marshall film Lessons to Swim* made in 1925 in "the little village of Caddisford" before it "vanished" from his collection. The film was a valuable historical record of Heidelberg during the late 1920's. Davidson has also heard about people who have lost a lot of old film cans in their houses knowing little of what to do with them and eventually throwing them out with the rubbish. Many of the early Australian films were lost forever before the advent of sound, but the fate of many more feature productions still in existence is daily told in the balance.

It would be difficult to overestimate the work carried out by men such as Harry Davidson. Singlehandedly they have saved for posterity films which are of priceless historical and artistic value. Yet their work has hardly begun. The variety and number of the collections, the disparity between storage procedures, and the continual process of decomposition of much of the material in this stock, all point to the immediate establishment of a Government-sponsored film archive which could work in close co-operation with film collectors nationwide. However, along with most other collectors, Davidson feels that the responsibility for the operation and running of a National Film Archive should be delegated to people who are



preserved in film preservation and documentation

It must be run by film freaks. Men who know film and understand it. You can't just have a salaried man where they advertise a vacancy in a new film archive and anyone can get the job, finding they may be bloody well knowing what they're doing. But if it was there with a definite purpose and a feeling towards it, which is what I think I've got, and they could show the films to the right audience and to the right people, and preserve them in the right way with due recognition, then I suppose the films in my collection would be available.

Elsewhere in the world, however, film collectors are regarded unfavorably as possible candidates for the staffing of a film archive. This attitude is possibly due to their individualism and their unwillingness to co-operate and share their love of film with administrators.

They're a breed all on their own. People react differently to different things. I suppose it's not what you do, it's the way you do it. A lot of these blokes just like to collect their films, and look at them themselves and say, "well this is mine. The rest of the world, the rest of the country, can't see it. I'm sitting here looking at it now." If you're just any looking towards the world, and hope that haven't notice yet what a bit and not go on and on it seems to be going, and you believe people should look at these old films and appreciate them, then they should be saved and preserved, provided the right people are doing it.

The present situation is that films are stored in the National Library in Canberra. It is an unsatisfactory situation, particularly from the viewpoint of preservation and documentation. Yet Australians seem to have always demonstrated a peculiar sensitivity towards the preservation of their history, and their culture.

It's the Great Australian Archive. Film has been popular in Australia as long as it does over overseas. It's from overseas it's good. If a bit of discretion has been brought across the water for some reason or other it's better than ours. If you've got an archive amongst the general public where it's no bloody good because it's Australian, this same thing is going to wear off when film archives are concerned. They don't even want to see the film that has been shot over the years. This has always been the drawback — "The Good Old Aussie" himself.

The paths of Australia are, however, demonstrating a renewed awareness of their past and a more critical sensitivity in their traditions. They are in fact the most devoted supporters of people such as Harry Davidson. He has preserved a past which is relied upon as the images flicker across the screen photos to Wodjibagg in 1912, soldiers marching to war in 1915, Perfection fashion parades even 1913, as well as such feature films as *The Stockman's Heir*, *The Hessian Bark*, and many of the New G. Phil's films from the 1910s. An indication of the ultimate value of Davidson's work in his greatest grouping together of the film which marked the beginning of the career of perhaps Australia's greatest film-maker Ken G. Hall's *The Exploits of the Easton* made in 1927. The loss of the film, the only print in existence would merely represent one more addition to the already long list of tragic Australian feature films which have disappeared. We have a duty to our future.

Phil Taylor and Ben Cooper

If you possess any old film items at home you contact Harry Davidson at home in Melbourne 49-4823, or at work 49-4778.

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"I gotta get me dough
before these blokes get
blowed up."

*Note: This incident is based on
absolute fact and the ship's
financier, with typical Australian
nonchalance, gathered in his debts,
literally under the German gun!*



(Right) *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926). Davidson's original (lost) print of this film contains the famous sports stadium scene (above). Only still shots were thought to have existed of this sequence.

(Left) Frame enlargements from Davidson's original print of Ken Hall's *Exploits of the Eagles* (1925). A sailor taken in his belt during a call to action.





great laughs of the cinema

The following story-board of frame enlargements is from the Lubitch episode in the 1932 film *If I Had A Million*.

A dying old tycoon, continually harassed by parasitic relatives and lawyers, decides to give away his fortune. To each person randomly selected from the telephone directory he gives a million dollars. The film then details various situations into which this good fortune comes, one of the most famous being W. C. Fields' war on the nation's 'road-hogs'.

The Lubitch episode opens with a marvellous tracking shot in on a Phineas V. Lovehart (Charles Loughton) who is sitting amongst a thousand other clerks. After opening his mail he calmly rises, walks out of the office and begins climbing the long stairs. Then, in a montage of dissolves, he passes through every office on his way to the top — Mr Brown. He straightens himself in front of a mirror and testatively knocks on the door. On entering, he delivers his brief, though rather clear, message — 'Blah!'





Keith Baker is severely suffering a discomfiting
Acute 1930



Any summary of the 1974 Melbourne and Sydney Festivals is prone to be a personal one and depends largely on how broad one is of the films selected by Messieurs Redo and Stratton. However, assuming that one of the Festival's intended aims is showing films that would otherwise not be seen, there are some points that need to be made. I refer in particular to the Melbourne Festival.

(1) Though the Festival organizers have an a priori right to select whatever films they wish, it seems a pity that such large areas of world cinema should be ignored. Firstly the Festival is heavily biased towards middle-European cinema, and often totally ignores the South American, African, Cuban and American cinemas. Secondly the selection from any particular country is biased against the experimental and innovative. This year for example three French films were shown: *Love in the Afternoon*, *Thérèse* and *Bleed Wedding*.

The first two have already secured Australian releases and the *Châliot* is

highly likely to. Why such a commercial selection? There was a very large number of interesting French films completed recently, all of which would have no chance of a local release. Gustache's *Mother and the Whore*; J. Rivière's *Celine and Julie Go Boating*; Quinquenne and Persic's *A Man Who Died*, the Straubs, the Robbe-Grillet's etc. ad infinitum.

(2) The programming was, as one has come to expect, highly peculiar. There was no evidence of a coherent policy at all. The rights included some of the very worst (*Limbo*, *The Wanderers*, *Dearest Thunder*), and the Saturdays some of the best (*Belle*, *Spirit of the Beesive*, *Mean Streets*). However the most obvious example of bad programming was the tacking away of the Festival's meagre stock. *Crest D'Or*, in a few oddcase edition, especially after the appalling *Ichikawa* the night before. This year's selection was also very poor, the majority

of directors being concerned with serious social problems. Why then was nothing done to vary the type of films, for example the earlier programming of *Thérèse* and *Mean Streets*?

(3) The selection of shorts has now reached such a low ebb that a deliberate policy must be adopted. Too often one was driven outside to the cold and stony foyer. There were good shorts made last year, and they simply should have been shown. Given then the above limitations, self-imposed though they may be, the 1974 Festival was little better or worse than most others. Certainly by '73 standards it was disappointing, but it did have its average four or five particularly good films. However there weren't the discoveries, or the controversies that one would hope for. It was a before Festival, and an occasionally dull one. Also without a reference for adventurous programming, the future Festival, one suspects, will be little different.

Seán Murray

Melbourne & Sydney Film Festivals 1974

When asked why Maspero is so fascinated by the nude Lino in *The Confessional*, Bertolucci calmly replied that all fascists are homosexual. General history would also have it that they are all sadists. Maspero's idea that he is neither *Coup D'Etat* is the study of a man riddled by self-doubt. There is nothing he fears more than to lapse into an action contrary to his beliefs. Denial of self and devotion to the Emperor are virtues above all others. Kira's life work is to aid in that devotion, something which he feels is being disrupted by a situation of disorder in the community. His solution, detailed in "A Draft for Rebuilding Japan," is an education of a right-wing military coup in favor of the Emperor if people haven't the ability, or desire, to order their own lives, then order should be applied for them.

Whenever Kira feels tempted by lustre thoughts he punishes himself. A razor is dragged slowly across the back of his anal and dropped into a pit of water to be destroyed — he is, in a sense, a purveyor of purification in the name of the Emperor. This act, like every other in his life, is an act of ritual. Everything is done precisely as it must be, and always as it has been, for the greatness of Japan comes from its strict adherence to ritual. Through ritual comes self-control. When the planned coup fails, Kira is arrested and taken away to be executed. Kneeling, he is bound to a white cross. The ritual ends, and is the film's most beautiful image. Stated gently, erupts from behind the purity of the blood-field. There is no bullet wound, the blood has been willing to flow. Like Kobayashi's samurai, Kira Kira has committed ritual suicide.

Yoshida's film is exceptionally formal, and welcomingly Japanese after the apathy of Kurosawa's. Every composition and camera movement has been precisely determined, large areas of screen being often skewed out to exactly pinpoint one's attention. This sometimes provides stylistic difficulties as images can tend to be static and the editing abrupt, but here the pace is perfectly judged. This rigid control is imperative in the conceptual aim of showing the necessity of order in Kira's life — he exists only for order. Consequently the film's structural form must convey such an impression, and it does brilliantly. The precision only heightens our understanding and feeling for the man. *Coup D'Etat* is an extraordinarily powerful film.

The Wedding is a lament for a lost Poland in a highly unending opening, a wedding party moves away from a township and out into the countryside. Any uneasiness in this interlude, between a noble poet and peasant girl, is quickly heightened by the appearance of soldiers manoeuvring in the distance. The following celebrations are exceptionally gay, a defiance to the bleakness around them. The

differing social classes mix somewhat awkwardly, but the occasional blunt remark is left unnoticed in the extreme easiness. Here Wajda excels himself, brilliantly intertwining snippets of dialogue with the swirling dancers. A great danger of a peering camera selecting relevant snippets of conversation is that it can look overlooked, as in the opening of *Las Enlaides du Paredes*. However Wajda's extraordinary technical proficiency, especially in the post dubbing, simply leaves one exhilarated and quite unaware of the complex patterns he is working.

Then amongst the reality, strange feelings begin to emerge. A lone soldier riding past in the mist is glimpsed through a window, the background music momentarily dissolving into a deep, throbbing wail. Suddenly everything is as before, Wajda has asked that we wanted to create a "film reality in which the words of thoughts, feelings and occurrences might co-exist on equal footing, where dream and reality would imperceptibly intertwine." Here he succeeds quite effectively, his transient changes of mood gently unsettling the audience for what is to come. However when it

does come Wajda seems to throw subtlety away, crudely delineating dream from reality by monotone lists. As these appertitions increase, tension gradually mounts. The party forsake their patronizing politeness for a stark defiance, while the peasants proclaim their spiritual links with the poet of Poland in his dream, the host is presented with a golden horn, like that entrusted to a youth who rides off across the countryside calling the peasants to arms. Attempts to raise patriotic spirit amongst the guests however, only divides them into their respective social classes. It is only the drunken peasants who arm themselves with scythes to fight the cause. The party are accused of desertion and rounded up, but before the violence erupts the youth returns, the horn lost and the call to arms ignored. A lone walk begins to play. Puppet-like the peasants commence a weary dance, echoing the bridegroom's earlier remark, "I don't care what happens now, so long as the musicians play." The emotional and the intellectual have failed to merge and the crisis for salvation again gone unheeded. On the frontier the enemy soldiers



Below: The execution of Kira Kira, leader of the right-wing coup. In Yoshida's *Coup D'Etat*.

Right: The uneasy marriage of a noble poet (Daniel Olbrychski) and a peasant girl (Sylvie Zmer) in Wajda's lament for a lost Poland — **THE WEDDING**.



remain, the cause still unwon.

Wejda's pessimism seems justified. Poland is reportedly no closer to independence than it was in 1980. That cottage isolated in the mid-bound blackness is Poland alone in an indifferent Europe, and the oppositions that unearthened centuries beneath the canopy, the problems that still face Poland today. Unification has replaced the agrarian economy, and with it the soul that is the peasants. The strength needed to move the indifference of the people seems no nearer.

Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* and Visconti's *Ludwig* are probably the most tragic cases of distributor bickery since von Sternheim's *Good, Andrei Rublev* completed in 1965, was originally 205 minutes long. However it ran into trouble with the Russian authorities for allegedly being historically inaccurate, anti-religious and over-indulgent in its depiction of horror. As a result it was shelved for several years and deprived of its most violent 20 minutes. The longest print ever released runs 185 minutes, and is the one now shown.

in France and Russia. After several more years on the shelf, Columbia took up world rights and released it in England last year, now running only 165 minutes. Where those 10 minutes disappeared is uncertain. The Festival, however, has managed to discover an even shorter print (listed in the programme as 142 but closer to 165). It may appear rather pointless to detail Rublev's butchered history but it is especially tragic since the *Ludwig* with its missing 92 minutes, the whole structural balance has been destroyed. All one is left with is a series of brilliant fragments, loosely linked together.

Tarkovsky's *Rublev* opens with a party of prelaten vainly trying to raise a church bell from the marshes by the use of hot air balloons. However a raid by some warriors suddenly disperses them. It is then we pick up Rublev taking refuge in an inn. The conversation with the monks is clearly with one attempt being futile and interrupted, the other triumphant.

At the beginning Rublev is incapable of human compassion, he being purely concern-

ed with his own internal struggles. "Rublev placed Man first, in Man he sought God," he regarded him as the house in which God lived" (Tarkovsky). The film then settles into episodes detailing Rublev's inability to cope with the events around him — his accidental involvement in a pagan festival, his creative inactivity during the building of a cathedral and his uncomprehending participation in the Judgement Day Massacre. Throughout all these events his desires are futile and tragic. His attack on the latter fails to save either the church from being defaced, or the girl — the latter leaving with the latters because their friendly gestures mean, for her, far more than the stoney reserves of Rublev. The vow of silence only withdraws Rublev further into himself and there no answers seem to be found.

In order that a magnificent church bell be constructed, a prince sends out some messengers to find a master craftsman. As however have fled or been killed in the latter made. Only a boy remains. Claiming to have been told the casting secret by his dying father, the boy is retained and commences to cast the bell. During his work the boy is constantly watched over by the silent monk. The bell is finally raised and a peal amongst a rejoicing crowd. The boy, however, wanders off and sinks weeping into a marsh. Rublev approaches and, taking the boy in his arms, shows his first signs of emotion and feeling. The boy explains that there is no secret. However he must still create. Agencies of instruction and ignorance are not the barriers Rublev has thought them to be, rather they are the unresolvable pains of creativity. Rublev's found compassion has come from his understanding of the boy, from the knowledge that the boy possesses what he has up till now always lacked: that ability to create, not in spite of, but because of all the difficulties one faces. Understanding comes from the opening out of oneself and the ability to face whatever presents itself. The answer is not inside Man, but outside. Man is in God, not God in Man. *Andrei Rublev* is an extremely fine film.

Black Holiday and *The Traitors* are interesting companion pieces, both carefully tailored for their respective audiences. Leto's film is a highly intelligent and stylised exercise in cultural cinema. Gleizer's is crude but often powerful attempt at emotional confrontation.

Leto's *Black Holiday* carefully shows one man's realisation of the need to revolt against tyranny. During the reign of Mussolini, the son of a wealthy professor (Aldoberto Morri) is sent to an island reformatory for anti-fascist remarks. He is quite apart from the other prisoners, his stand against Fascism has been a drinking-room one: theirs a confrontation with the ruling class. At first Morri tries to get



Above: The church of the Judgement Day Massacre. in *ANDREI RUBLEV*.

Left: The antifascist rally from Marco Leto's *BLACK HOLIDAY*.

them to see his views, teaching the importance of learning from history, of how class struggles constantly repeat themselves. However he is awed by a barrage of what he considers meaningless slogans. Having been a student of Merli's father, the island's governor allows him certain privileges: deprived from the rest of society in a beautiful villa, and joined by his wife, he waits out the sentence. Merli discovers a piano and begins to divide his time between lonely walks along the beach and the playing of it, a pleasure which turns into performance during the frequent visits of the governor. Lato so beautifully creates an atmosphere of harmony that one easily forgets the other prisoners in the fortress below. And, for a time, does Merli. The governor is, of course, an expert manipulator, appearing to Merli as a divided servant of Fascism who, through compromise and persuasion, eases some of the hardships of confinement. Actually, he is merely removing him from amongst the other prisoners: an intellectual element that he feels could be used to incite dissent. This is something he has carefully restrained, using terror tactics disguised as revenge amongst quarrelling factions. However one red goes too far, and a prisoner Merli once held long arguments with is murdered. He then rejects his hypocritical stance, abandons his family and swears off to join the anti-Fascist movement on the mainland.

Merli is an intellectual and a man of very ordered beliefs. Everything fits to a pattern, a pattern that has appeared and is repeated through history. He is strict, conventional; as this belief excludes the possibility of new ideas, of new struggles. Consequently he is a person one would suspect least likely to join the revolutionary forces. It is the way in which Lato so convincingly details the transformation that makes it a masterpiece. Appealing directly to the intellect, Lato tries to lead the audience through the same decisions that Merli has taken. The long discussions on the beach with the other prisoners are really the arguments Merli is having with himself. Any event has its set of interpretations and the prisoners one must take to choose one is preference to another, is what these debates are essentially about. It is also in these scenes that Lato demonstrates his extraordinary ability as a director. Aware that long political dialogues tend to stagnate an audience, he breaks them up into an exceptionally complex series of trading shots, each carrying the audience closer to the argument. The criticism that the use of such a technique to voice a person's inner thoughts is somewhat simplistic is here rather irrelevant, because Lato then shows us the latter transformation without again resorting to verbalization: instead he connects the person with the background. Merli begins to look increasingly

uncomfortable in his villa and spends more and more time away from it on the beach. He also feels a growing separation from his wife, the easily accepting the heritage of the governor for the privileges it affords. To her he finds little to say. Merli looks a distressed visitor amongst the peacefulness of the villa. His bobbing swim away from the island is clearly moving for one feels, at least partially, that one understands him. After all Lato has asked us to make a similar decision, and if one finally disagrees with Merli's stand, no matter—at least one has considered it. *Blood Wedding* is so extremely beautiful and moving film.

Oliver's *The Trells* is a fundamentally different film to Lato's, and an inferior one. It is a small, intense, an emotional plea for revolution that itself ignores any form of intellectual persuasion. The majority of the film is a nicely detailed account of trade unionist Barner's rise to power. As he fights his way upwards he unconsciously adopts the techniques and conclusions of those he is attacking. Finally he is revealed as corrupt as his opposition. Then there is a brief sequence where a group of revolutionaries discuss new ways of confronting the ruling classes. They decide to assassinate the corrupt unionist.

What eventually goes against *The Trells* is the dishonesty of its call to arms. The revolutionaries murder Barner because, in attacking the bourgeoisie, he has become like them, and his union machinery ossified. However no indication is given that these new structures will be able to withstand the corrupting forces as them. That a lesson has been learned from history is hardly convincing enough. Also disturbing is that Barner's collapse is presented very matter-of-factly, the audience judging his case like a jury. The call to revolution is however a visceral attack on the audience, one they are asked to accept at its level. It is fundamentally dishonest to minutely detail the corruptness of an opposition, without considering the rationale of the alternative for which one is pleading.

Blood Wedding is a drama of the closing of ranks, an analysis of the means by which the bourgeoisie defend themselves. Chabrol examines three attacks on the bourgeois notch at family, the last attack of Lucienne and Pierre's murder, by Pierre, of his wife Odette, and the murder of Lucienne's husband Paul by his anxious sons.

Pierre and Lucienne begin their affair with a series of hurried and unworldly rendezvous. Limited by time, their lovemaking is reduced to vulgar gropings and quick stolen furtive into the bushes whenever anyone approaches. Pierre decides to free their passion by murdering his wife, but the act proves pointless when Paul detects the affair. The

murder of Paul also brings them so close, now hindered by a self-imposed separation to avoid suspicion. Then after an innocent letter from Lucienne's daughter Helene, a letter aimed at removing suspicion rather than implying some, the police arrest the lovers who are separated for ever. However the bourgeoisie will in no way be affected, Pierre and Lucienne will be seen as deviants, subverts well rid of. The bourgeois has condemned and exterminated them, and their closed circles remain behind them.

The superb impenetrability of their defenses is also cleverly shown by the use of heavy irony. Pierre, when finally confronted by the police, admits to the crime of Paul's murder, adding that he has also killed his wife. The arrest takes place under the scolding eye of Clotilde's portrait. Secondly, and most importantly, is the scene being trapped by Helene's letter. It is here Chabrol scores his major points. Helene is the illegitimate child of Lucienne, conceived before her marriage to Paul. She is an outsider in the very midst of the bourgeoisie, her sympathy always with Lucienne. Their knowing complicity and joint mockery of the charade around them blinds them closer. They are more like sisters than mother and daughter, though one is even tempted to say, more like lovers—Helene's resemblance to Mary (Les Liches) seems too extraordinary to ignore. Consequently when Helene learns of her mother's affair, she once again sides with her. The letter protesting the absence of anything improper is an act of innocence, the act of an outsider. The moral pretensions of the bourgeois, the police, perversely interpret the letter as the reverse of what it says. Judgment is passed. Thus a thorn in the nest, an illegitimate child, has inadvertently purified it by discarding two others, Pierre and Lucienne.

The truly savage blow of irony Chabrol saves for the very end. After delivering their respective confessions, Pierre and Lucienne are placed in a police van and hesitated together—bound but irresistibly separated. An officer turns round and asks why they didn't simply leave in the first place. "Oh, we never even thought of that." The bourgeoisie is self-contained because this helps strengthen itself. Pierre and Lucienne never thought of leaving Varennes because they have been conditioned not to. Their solutions must be found within the boundaries they exist in. The bourgeoisie is corrupt and as are its solutions. So cleverly corrupt though that they appear to be purifiers, cleansing the rottenness within.

Romer's drama is an exploration of the geometrical patterns in everyday life. *Love in the Afternoon* now completes the six realist films on the temptations of infidelity—six because that is the precise number of situations involving a betrothed couple and

Slight: The shared melancholy of Chabrol's six movies has in *BLOOD WEDDING*.



temptress. I use both infidelity and betrayed loyalty because there is little difference to Rhomer whether sex is married, engaged or simply involved in the pursuit of a perfect love. In each case a choice has been taken. Each Rhomerian male will have his decision tested, but the temptress will fail. There is no surprise in logic, and moral law is an attempt at logic in *Love in the Afternoon*, a husband Frederique is tempted by an unattached, Bohemian Chloe. They are attracted because they are opposites: he is a believer in the need to be a good husband, she in the superiority of marriage. Frederique probably comes closest to being seduced of any Rhomerian male, but his virtue survives.

Escaping out a bathroom door, Frederique returns to a strengthened marriage, his decision to marry vindicated. Helene and Frederique are compatible.

Given the classic, and intended predictability of the film, their success must eventually depend on their richness of detail and nuance. In scenes such as Frederique and Chloe on the park bench there is great intensity of feeling, here heightened by Chloe deliberately kissing him everywhere but on the lips. Too often though a scene becomes a series of twitching mouths and eyelids, the editors struggling to suggest that perhaps there is a life behind these geometric love in the *Afternoon* is a decided improvement on

Celine's *Knee*, but still sadly short of *My Night at Maud's*. Concoquely though, precision is still Rhomer's greatest virtue. Note for instance, the brilliant timing of the last shot.

Belle is a film about obsession. Mettieu is the pure romanticist, a creator of private worlds, his notions of beauty and love, those of the sixteenth century love poets. Belle is his obsession and everything he does is to help make her part of his world. Mettieu ceases to reason. He believes the stranger's murder is an act of love, and when the body is not found, he is unable to accept it. For months he searches the snow covered countryside. Then, standing over the frozen body, he



Above: The tempted Frederique (Bernard Verley) left leaves his gaze in *LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON*, the sixth of Rhomer's moral tales

joyfully exclaims: "She does love me... she did do it for me."

The world Delvaux has created balances delicately on the edge of surrealism, into which things occasionally tumble, like *Machete* in his inebriated dream. The roman à l'imagery is again extraordinary: the silent, deserted town, the wind-swept Ardennes, and the welcoming, cozy interiors. And as Belle, Doreille Delorme is neither too beautiful, nor too available. Her attraction is that she is always just step away. A beautiful, haunting film.

Illumination was the festival's major disappointment. The assurance and clarity of Zaluski's previous films had been exchanged for a quasi-documentary approach. What resulted was a patchily drawn mosaic of one man's spiritual search for illumination. The existence of an absolute body of knowledge is a question many directors have attempted to answer, and history is full of their miserable failures. In literature there appears a pre-scribed set of experiences through which one must pass if illumination is to be attained: poverty, disillusionment, great tragedy and a little retreat devoted to the study of Eastern philosophy. Zaluski's hero predictably passes through them all, well on some kind of training course. Each experience is deliberately underplayed, but remains unconvincing, notably the journey to the monastery where its spiritual leader meets the expected platitudes.

Franciszek's conclusion that such a body of knowledge is non-existent holds little conviction, unavoidable given that his experiences are so plastic. The only time the film generates any compassion is when Franciszek returns to his wife. Momentarily the film sparks to life, probably due to the extraordinarily fine acting of Monika Olszewska-Dziubczak. She is so good in fact, that she almost gives the ending. The two close-ups of her looking across at Franciszek are extremely moving.

Peter Jarvis's *One Man's War* was sincere but plodding, the sort of film one feels obliged to admire but finds difficult doing so. The performances were strong and the narrative compression at times excellent, but Jarvis keeps belittling his characters with an indulgent use of counterpoint. The scene of a contractor unaccountably going back on his word is immediately followed by a worker discussing painting and its relevance to life. It is just as unnecessary. One technique which does however work, is the use of flash forwards to the boat trip to Sweden. By removing all elements of suspense, Jarvis has freed the narrative to more interpretatively examine the family's hardships.



ABOVE: The extraordinary Monika Olszewska-Dziubczak in Zaluski's *ILLUMINATION*

RIGHT: The monastery sequence from Zaluski's *ILLUMINATION*





The isolated village of **Earth Our Sinful Song** is a tradition-bound community stubbornly protecting its own morality. Consequently, when Metta begins an affair with a passing reindeer herder, she runs into conflict. However, it is all too predictable, too pat, from her pregnancy to the later confrontation with her father. A sense of inevitability is important, for it is this that Mollberg feels is stifling the peasant way of life. However, this doesn't necessitate the need for predictability of plot, and Mollberg clearly enjoys using the obvious as a dramatic device. The story as such is not remarkable and this kind of approach only leads to what is required are richly detailed insights into personal behavior but they never materialize. The film doggedly tries for emotional involvement but finally fails to invoke any. A pity because the performances of the non-actors and the script's passion for earthy realism, deserved a better fate.



The problem with **Timen** is that Papis employs two unrelated styles simultaneously. The first is to let a sequence gently unfold, the actors relaxing any attempt at performance. Consequently the scenes are often rambling, but generally imbued with a hyper-realistic tone. The opening sequence, with Timen trying to show interest in people he shuns, is a perfect example. The realism comes not from a series of clever observations, but from a sense of having been there oneself. The second style is to throw in a punch line at the end of each scene which then accentuates the pace. After Timen's long walk through the town he sits down, calmly observes his fellow actors and then denounces their parts as quite insignificant. Cut to next scene.

Timen is the story of a man withdrawing into himself. At each stage he is too fearful to confide in another, and consequently withdraws even further. It is an extremely difficult film to do well, and one that demands perfect control. Consequently, as the above styles appear somewhat in conflict, the resultant film lacks strength.

Daniel Thander strengthened one's doubts about Ray's acting career. The same stylistic stoniness apparent in **Gypsy** and **Baghe**, was here very evident. I must re-emphasize such apparently constructed sequences, the shooting script one imagines being the product of accident. The opening montage was particularly clumsy colour-balancing apparently unheard of. However the major disappointment was Ray's use of professional actors, and after having built a reputation for the use of non-actors, this seems doubly odd. The lead actress is like the best of female-riders present imaginable, and certainly shows no signs of waning as the hours continue. After a while one even begins to



Top: Metta during the birth of her illegitimate child in **EARTH OUR SINFUL SONG**.

Above: Metta Vitmarin as Metta the girl who carouses the old politician at village in Mollberg's **EARTH OUR SINFUL SONG**.

Left: Tula Hyman as the wife of the struggling sub-contractor in Risto Jarvi's **ONE MAN'S WAR**.

doubt the sincerity of Ray, especially when faced with the emotionless and contrived ending.

Donald Sutherland's *Between Friends* was another of the festival's major disappointments. Only occasionally did it rise above its melodramatic, if gratefully original, first drive into the swirling guilt of a reliable sadist, with its powerful fusion of music and bleak, snowy images. The impression is soon jarred by Chino screaming about how he'd again slept with Ella, about how she'd loved it. The basic idea, to crack up Toby in a dangerous situation, is sound, but the choice of expression extremely poor. The whole film is deliberately underplayed and its passionate use of metaphors holds no conviction at all.

The romantic style stood out effectively by Taylor in *La Solennit  *, was in *Return from Africa* quite but of key with the political considerations. The characters' diametric views of such shallow dimensions that their endless discussions seemed senseless. Overall, a sedate dreary and unimaginative film. Denis Arund's *Rajasthan Polverine* though was comparatively worse. Here one was subjected to such subtle deliberations of character as a guest stirring his soup during a vocal recital. It was frighteningly ambivalent, especially in the technical aspects of lighting and camera movement. *The Godfather's Fear of Poverty* was a peculiarly strange film, because though it continually and one to suspect it was on to something extraordinary. I never fully was. *Shogun's Possession* was also somewhat disappointing. To merely recreate competition in the style of a Georgian painter is NOT ground for praise. Ultimately it comes out as rather mannered and static, a pity as it is often quite sensitive. It was very surprising to learn that Coppola had spent over four and a half years, admittedly on and off, writing the screenplay of *The Conversation*. It looks more like another of his two-week specialties. The script is annoyingly superficial, and the heavy slush of the ending nothing more than smart-ass contrivance. However Coppola has directed it quite efficiently and, seemingly unaware of its essential banality, infused it with a newly controlled and underplayed feeling.

The *Memoirs* were predictably interesting, historical outbursts. *Love Me Tonight* was, at times, well directed and quite entertaining, though only in a highly superficial way. Garbo was the only film *Queen Christina* possessed, but today her acting is so stylized and over-dramatic as to be laughable. *Song of Songs* was an annihilated disaster and Dietrich quite embarrassing, except of course for the excellent, "Give me a cigarette." It seems incredible that Mannheim should

entertain such respect as a creative director. He is purely a technician and, though an occasionally good one, probably a historically unimportant one.

Linked easily won the award for pretentiousness and vulgarity. Zoltan Husz  k has attempted to create an intensity of feeling through a series of finely etched details on the poet's life. However, it is reduced to a scrambled array of fragments, a close-up of bread, an exposed breast and a rootless long shot of a deserted street. The order in which these shots are edited is totally arbitrary, as demonstrated by the accidental inclusion of three flash-frems. The most repeated image is of an emaciated blob which Husz  k later claims to be an extreme close-up of an old droplet floating on a potato soup. He has strived very deliberately to be refined, subtle and elegant, but only succeeds in being vulgar. That so many people have called it *Prokusion* only proves how little "Remembrance of Things Past" is needed these days.

SCOTT MURRAY

Seriousness from personal experience can infuse a film with a potency other genres don't have at their disposal. George Lucas' *American Graffiti* has an almost artistic quality to it compared to Martin Scorsese's

slightly baroque but glossy *Mean Streets*. Lucas tends to divide his actors, manipulating his actors along a set path, delivering his film with almost mathematical precision. Scorsese tends to hold his camera back, giving his characters the necessary space to grow strength from the richness of their environment. Lucas' affectionate nostalgia for his stereotyped characters is virtually flawless, but Scorsese is interested in more — his *Mulberry Street* punks have appealing qualities but their lives are essentially tragic. The inner edge of violence always slightly below the surface. Scorsese's autobiographical vision is enriched by his capacity to avoid condescending or patronizing characterization. Charlie (Henry Kats) the small time hood at the center of the film gets caught between the demands of a higher middle echelon and his desire to run a restaurant, (pay-off for being a good boy). For most of the film he succeeds in weaving a subtle path between a myriad of conflicting clues, stepping short of overt violence, pleading to feelings of commonality and that unique humanity punks seem to share. Yet the very structure of the small time gangster world rests on the necessity of violence to deal with code breakers. An ability to charm, risk, fast and dust out the guardsmen when they're needed, defines an individual's position and power. Charlie eventually reaches a



Above: A. Vassallo as the Georgian painter, in Shogun's *POSSSESSION*.

Scott Murray is Cinema Paper's Managing Editor, and is also compiling work on a 40 min short called *Dolls*.

crisis — he is forced to choose between the tougher, more violent and infinitely colder world of big business Mafia or the hapless, unprotected and mawkish stress he is attempting to transcend. Specifically, Michael (Richard Gere) wants the money owed him by Charlie's best friend — the bumbling, reckless, irresponsible Johnny Boy (Robert de Niro). Charlie chooses to run, taking his epileptic girlfriend and Johnny Boy out of L.A. to Italy.

But he knows the code better than anyone else — running away is reaching the end of the line. His epiphany is a foreshadowing pavement hydrant, a smashed car on a New York street, dying friends and an arm shattered by Michael's hired assassin. Scorsese makes more mistakes than Lucas (wrong casting in minor parts, falls in pace, disjointed narrative cuts etc.), but *Mean Streets* is a far more ambitious project than *American Graffiti* — more concerned, more resistant, and one suspects, a little closer to the heart than lingering memories of Howling Wolfman Jack.

Rod Bishop

The type of film broadly known as the documentary has become as predictable in format as the morning newspaper. Rather than film as an art form, it represents film as a visual-verbal information channel, a practical technology. The audience is held firmly back

behind the camera and shown the life of another culture in a manner at pains to reflect the objectivity of the film makers. The implicit assumption of such movies is that life-styles, other than one's own, are alien and require exploration if the audience is to respond to them without hostility. Inevitably, therefore, the film presents the director's exploration, based on the prejudices he anticipates towards the culture he confronts, rather than the culture itself. Antonioni's *China* is a good example of this. The sense of his distance from his subject is so great that at times one is reminded of Hare and Lode Hare films about animals — "These are their eating habits". The stars are shy. Note how they run from the camera.

There is no such pathos in the Darling film *Tidkawa & Friends*. The ten minute commentary that opens the film offers the minimum of necessary information, headed over like a cursory passport. After that there is no further exploration and the audience's impression of the life that they enter relies on their own reaction to the Dorings' empathetic presentation of a people who, while their life-style is vastly different from our own, are presented with a wholeness and dignity that allows us the sense of entering their life with a common human understanding, rather than watching it from the outside.

Tidkawa & Friends is far from being a

documentary in the sense outlined above. It unites the subject and the form in a film which reveals the daily life of the Bedamini of the Great Papuan Plateau rain forest as a living work of art. Ignoring the potential sensationalism of the fact that the Bedamini are known for their aggression towards outsiders, the Dorings implicitly accept the confines of what is their accepted world, quietly allowing the positive qualities of their life to emerge, so that we have a sense of what the aggression seeks to protect.

So little is the heavy intention of the documentary-director present, that if the film could be said to reflect a philosophy on the part of the director it would probably be closest to some sort of Wedgegerrian 'letting be of what is'. The 'what is' for the Bedamini is a close reflection of 'what is' in the natural environment of which they feel themselves so much a part. It is the taking of a tree, the summing of the spirits, the preparing of food, the Bedamini's relationship to what might be called the 'raw materials' of their life is expressed as one of release, not dedicated communion with other life forms, rather than the things of Western culture. The attitude is summed up in the relationship to death, which is faced with sorrow but not rejection.

The shot of an old skeleton, left open to the sky, decaying to a point where there are only black, almost blood traces that drape across the bones and merge with the branches around it, is remarkable because outside the context of the film it would probably affront a Western audience. Its lyrical quality, like the expression in the eye of the wood chopper, is not only an example of the Dorings' transformation of a documentary subject into an art form, but also a tour de force of real cross-cultural communication.

It is one of the commonplace tragedies of the commercial film world that Antonioni's un-inspired and derivative *China* will probably be widely seen, while the truly original work of a less publicised name will reach a far smaller audience. *Tidkawa & Friends* is one of the few Australian-made films that has something new to offer an international audience.

Thermoe is a fascinating synthesis of elements not often successfully combined. Its theme is a relentless summons to political action, yet communicated through a picture of the political reality that is at once symbolic and intensely humorous. The exploitation and injustice on which the Western industrial consumer society depend are revealed, not through heavy analysis (a form that shall delude its purpose by using the language and thought patterns of the system it seeks to condemn) but through a light, almost slapstick approach whose very form reveals the absurdity that is one of the system's greatest indictments. In this sense, *Thermoe* strikes the



Above: Charlie (Henry Kroll) watches a battle in Martin Scorsese's *MEAN STREETS*.

system in its Achilles' heel. The motive for its rejection seems to stem, not from complicated arguments such as characterise a Godard film (making the act of rejection often appear as tedious, boring and operationally cerebral as is the acceptance of it) but from a simple human response rising from the gut rather than the brain. The approach is powerfully underlined by the absence of language throughout the film. The clear suggestion is that the spoken word has been distorted to the point of meaninglessness, except as another mechanism of manipulation and fragmentation.

The story is obviously based on a deep analysis of the Western system, to the extent that its message, while overtly simplistic, is more profound than many overtly serious political films. It suggests that the real construction of the system depends simply on its acceptance by each individual as if it were a reality. It is individual actions that make the system.

So, *Thermoe* is a fantasy about one man (Michael Piccoli) who stops making the system. At the start of the film he is one amorphous cog in the wheel, one of the regimented storms moving along the aseptic underground, wearing the overall that marks him, with hundreds of others, as an insignificant part of industry's amorphous machinery. While painting a window, he sees one of the boss-men rigidly stroking the knee of a secretary. Annoyed by the boss, who has led him away, he breaks free long enough to lock himself in a narrow toilet cubicle where he howls and cries in a newly released frustration, from which he emerges a changed man. He returns to his flat and sleeps with his sister, realising the cleave between them that he had previously denied. His last mother, whose main part in his life had hitherto been to jab a finger at the clock that summoned him to work, becomes a purposeless figure who twitches compulsively. Her son, meanwhile, walls himself and his sister inside a room, knocks away the outer wall and builds the only a-bloc of consumer life into the street. He and his sister live naked in the room, translocated to a kind of urban cave that is open to the street. The efforts of the police and army to oust them and return them to normality are rebuffed and confused, then their own, now joyous behaviour. The freedom and control over their lives that they so sensuously exhibit is infectious. Another wall falls and furniture tumbles to the street. Sexuality asserts itself over repression. In a night foray, Piccoli captures a policeman whom they roast and eat in their cave. This sequence is presented with less sense of destructiveness than the repressive opening shots of the destructiveness of industrial living.

It is at this point, of course, that the complexity of the film's underlying analysis

becomes confounded by what appears to be a very simplistic solution. However, the film does not seem to be setting at the present a solution in political terms, but rather in symbolic terms. Its message is not a call to try the policeman but a call to recognise the inherent contradiction of a system that is based on a life-suppressing complex of behaviour that for the sake of the symbolic status of a few adjusts the misery to a level of lifeless objects. It is a tribute to Farello that he has been able to say so much that is important, in a film that is so easy to watch and so much fun. Even Piccoli's role as the hairy, grunting hero is an integrated cultural shock to film audiences used to his Chebrol roles.

What people asks of *Thermoe* is very much a matter of an individual reaction, since it is at once a strongly political summons, but one that offers no intellectual justification to guide the audience's reaction. It relies on a similar view of the insanity of industrial life. Farello, an ex-factory worker, considers that his film will have failed unless it inspires at least three other workers to leave the factories. But unlike some politically motivated film-makers, he does not fall into the trap of using argument as a form of coercion for his cause. His message is a question rather than a solution. ■

FIONA MACKIE



Above: Michael Piccoli as the man who stops making the system in Farello's *Thermoe*.

Fiona Mackie is a novelist presently working on her second romance novel.

The Air France jet touched down at Nice Airport. Through the customs gates the multi-lingual medley converging on this gift and gutter doorway to the Riviera's resorts, set the scene for the 27th International Film Festival at Cannes: Producers, publicists, critics, actors and directors passed through these gates. It was another sunny day on the Côte d'Azur. It was May 9 1974.

1974 completely reinforced earlier impressions as to the unique importance of Cannes' annual event. Not so much perhaps as to the standard of films shown, although certainly Cannes' queue of exciting cinema dwarfed both Melbourne and Sydney this year. Indeed the range and depth of material in the Directors' Fortnight screenings, the Critics' Week Screenings, the French cinema perspective and of course, the Marche, are far beyond, both in high and low spots, anything here.

Of crucial importance, however, to the burgeoning local production industry here in Australia, is the series of perspective it gives to the film maker as to the international marketability of his production. The eyes of world cinema are focussed on Australia more and more frequently at late. (Last year's Cannes "Variety" featured a large Australian supplement; this year, the British trade paper "Cinema TV Today" did the same). The Australian producers at Cannes this year Jim and Hal McInroy and Peter War with *Sea of Cortez*, and David Black with *Crysalis Voyager*, will have a far surer grasp of the world cinema market in the future. And this is of immense importance to anyone who desires to screen their films farther afield than the local co-ops.

There are other Festivals of course, and Tehran may well be one to watch in the future but for the moment Cannes is the only world event that manages to combine the artistic and business aspects of cinema so expertly. It is very, very important that as the Australian production output increases, considerable thought be given to the most effective form that governmental and quasi governmental sponsorship of Australian screenings can take. This year Tom Stacey, of the Australian Film Development Corporation, was present on a fact-finding, contact-making tour, accompanied by Noel Garrick from Film Australia. David Rae from the Australian Film Institute showcased *Tiddies And Friends* and visited with *Crysalis Voyager* screenings.

Both the AFDC and the AFI will have to decide by next year whether this attendance should follow the Canadian pattern of hiring a single cinema and screening and rescreening the year's output to press and buyers over the Festival's duration, combined with general publicity back-up functions, or the method of its Benares and other venues consists of a central publishing body headquartered in one

of the main hotels, or the Festival building, merely listing around screenings individually arranged by the respective film's producers, if sales chilled up were the only criterion that the latter method would, on 73 and 74 experience, be the preferred exhibit. There are however other equally compelling reasons that led me to unreservedly support this second style.

The success of both *Cars That Are Pairs* and *Crysalis Voyager* in finding a sales to foreign territories was due in no small measure to the producers' exploitation campaign, the former of which of course attracted the attention of the world press. The Canadian price policy tends to submerge the individual film into a mass of inappreciable celluloid, it may well be more easily manageable in the bureaucratic sense, but I should be the right of every producer, be his film AFDC backed or not, to independently repackage his own film's promotion. In any event both the AFI and AFDC have thankfully now fully realised the importance of Festival representation and back up.

A number of the great masters of world cinema had their latest works on view. *Sea of Cortez*, for me, was Rainer's brilliant period piece *Stroszek*, his last film since 1968. Reinhold plays the exasperated clown, Jorge Semprun character, a 30s wanderer on a grand scale whose despair shook the powers of the French Third Republic. Reinhold chooses to interview *Stroszek*'s rise and fall with the attempt of Leon Trotsky to find asylum in France, and the famous disjunctive, temporal editing style is given full rein. Rainer's ability to recreate period, totally eclipses Ken Russell's gauzy, symbolised hidden efforts in *Nether*, his newer composer assassination attempt.

Stroszek, for Reinhold, is almost a mythological figure, a symbol of political apportionment whose manipulation by corrupt politicians was their own damnation. *Stroszek* also develops an intriguing relationship with Charles Beyer as the Baron Reaul, and it is a comment on the film's complete absence of ultimate moral judgment (and no doubt also on the character Reinhold) that a large degree of audience identification with *Stroszek* is always maintained.

Robert Breton's new film *Lancelot Du Lac*, his long awaited work on the legends surrounding the search for the Holy Grail and the Arthurian court, was the centre of some controversy. Granted from the official list of French films selected for screening at Cannes, and indeed at other world Festivals, it barely appeared under the auspices of the French Directors' Society who had campaigned heavily for it to be shown.

In *Lancelot* Breton recreates his archetypal structure. At the beginning of the film the Knights return from the search for the Grail, decimated in number and lustres in spirit. The failure to find the sacred cup has been their first defeat and there are misgivings within the castle, weakness and warring factions. Lancelot attributes his failure to recover the Grail to his adulterous affair with King Arthur's wife, Guinevere. He fell from Grace has destroyed him, and the Knights' company. He endeavours to give up his love, but the machinations of the jealous Mordred and Guinevere's continuing desire for him, ultimately lead to his death.

Breton's style is as idyllic and disorientated as ever. His actors, chosen for their moral resemblance to the characters they portray, are amazing, notably Laura Duke Comden as Guinevere and Luc Simon as Lancelot. Presented with a reasonably large budget and some of the blessings of a super production, Breton, save for an engagingly spirited opening, totally lacks any notions of large scale spectacle. His tournament scenes of jousting knights are, for the most part, played in medium-close shots that effectively prevent any audience identification at all. His film making is still as rigorous as his theology.

Steven Spielberg's follow-up to *Duel* is a glossy entertainment piece for the Zerkow-owned outfit at Universal, entitled *The Sugarland Express*. It is a thoroughly enjoyable version of Goldie Hawn and Warren Beatty's is a reworking of the chase concept. Goldie Hawn as Lou Jean visits her husband Gene at a minimum security prison farm, from where he is shortly to be released, and encourages him to escape. They steal a police car and are chased across Superland, Texas, by an ever mounting cavalry of police, sightseers, holiday makers and well wishers. Ben Johnson is the evasive prisoner, Captain Tanner, and Michael Beck is the young driver of the commandeered police car. Spielberg's expense is noted here until the downbeat conclusion, which, though expected, is still surprisingly effective.

Thieves Like Us, Robert Altman's new film is as patently as any of the director's previous work. Ostensibly a remake of *Night on They's They Live By Night*, Altman sets his film in the Mississippi of the depression 30's. His characters, three escaped prisoners, Chismey, T - Dub and Bowls (played by John Schuck, Bert Remsen and Keith Carradine respectively), rob banks across the countryside, hiding out between times at a garage run by Chismey's brother, Doc Moley. There Bowls manages to fall in love with Moley's daughter, Kerchie (Shelley Duvall). A few moments of happiness are rubbishly excited at the conclusion. Period is

Run and gales on the Croisette

Tony Ginnane at Cannes

heavily recreated, but often at the expense of length, and Altman's anachronistic dialogue is off putting. Too often the film lets victim to a blend of nostalgia and significance, which far remove it from the gut drive of the Ray original. Nonetheless, along with *The Long Goodbye*, it completes a nice portrait of misguided existentialism which somehow manages to make Elliott Gould and Katharine Ross look like contrives.

Three major disappointments appeared. Pasolini's *1001 Nights* was another slip into the morass by a still talented, but else disciplined director. The thing of his trilogy based on world famous literary landmarks, is a manuscript gone. Story after story is dragged together without meaningful plot or stylistic connection. Exorcism and magic are mixed

with an ethnological approach to the subject in endeavouring to find his own antiquity in Yemen, Persia and Nepal. Fellini confused himself and his audience with a strangely circuitous story-telling style and a fairly uninteresting mix of scenes. Escapism is emphatically avoided but nothing replaces it. His skill at selecting peasant faces is still apparent, and his use of yotes in long-shot is unique, but there is nothing more.

Fellini's *Answered* is a stylistic attempt to intellectualise the teenage slip and was well received by the director's admirers, who decided to compare it to Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. For me it was the usual grab-bag of self-indulgent whimsies, almost a summation of neo-realism gone

wrong. Fellini's notebook jottings, autobiographical or otherwise, may be an attempt at essaying the genius of the human comedy, but they are finally self-condemnatory. Fellini sees *Answered* as an art fascist film, yet the warmth and respect evoked for this childhood pest is almost unwitting grace.

Claude Lelouch's *Tout Un Vie (Just A Life)* is his attempt at magnum opus. The film, apparently a long cherished project, attempts to span the entire history of the cinema, from the nickelodeon to the present, and indeed concludes as science fiction. Its style changes as cinema develops from black and white to colour, to wide screen and so on. Its plot is a continuing love story which Lelouch con-



BEYON. Lancelot (Luc Steiner) and Guinevere (Laura Duke Costanzo) in Robert Bresson's **LANCELOT DU LAC**.
LUN. Fellini's **ANSWERED**

siders, destined by fate. Unfortunately in endeavouring to present this three-encyclopedia, *A Man And A Woman* for six generations, Lelouch completely obliterates any personal style at all and the whole film has the air of anonymity of a giant chocolate box commercial. Its plot also becomes ultimately sterile, and there is no attempt by Lelouch to transcend his material, or comment on it. The closing sequences of science fiction are ridiculous beyond belief.

Other films of promise in the main Festival screenings were Hal Ashby's *The Last Detail* (for Jack Nicholson's performance), Robert Mulligan's *The Nickel Ride* (for John Milius's performance), Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (for Gene Hackman's performance), and Reiner Weiser Fassbinder's *All Turks Are Called Ali* (for Brigitte Minn's performance).

Extraordinarily bad were Morton Heilig's *Once, The Nine Lives Of Fritz The Cat*, a sequel directed by Robert Taylor and Ken Russell's *Mobster*.

Jacques Tati's *Perfide*, an example of video transferred to film, showed that, for the French at least, it will be a while before this process ousts film as a viable release print form. Tati has however still to prove.

Outside the main Festival hundreds of other films were screened. Many were noteworthy and some humdrum; comments follow for completeness. Most may not reach Australia.

Dusan Makavejev's *Sweet Movie* was involved in a court action between the producer (Vincent Mile) and the director on the one hand, and star Carole Laure on the other, over the inclusion of some scenes of sexual coitus. The film itself turned out to be a witty and outrageous blend of politico-sexual humour in the style of *Wit* and *Switchboard Operator* style. Almost pitiless, *Sweet Movie* concerns the adventures of Miss World 1964 (Carole Laure) at the hands of Mr Kapital (John Vannoy), a seller from the Politiken (Pierre Clement), El Macho (Sam Frier), and Otto Muehl and members of the Vienna Milky Way Therapy Commune. She finally drowns in a chocolate cake while Massimo Introvati forges the identities involved in Kevin Forest. Makavejev scintillates from musical comedy of horror film, and one's response swings from amusement to revulsion. Censor problems could be expected in Australia.

The Critics Week screenings turned up Miguel Littin's beautifully bizarre allegory, *The Promised Land*, in which a group of peasants remote from the Chilean capital set up an agricultural commune. When Chile equities a socialist president for a short lived term, the group endeavours to spread their ideas further aided but are massacred by the rightist military forces. A real return to the swirling colours, and folk lore background, of



the early 60's Chilean novel. Littin's film was smuggled out of Chile at the time of the coup.

Jerry Bruck's *LP, Stone's Weekly* is a documentary on the maverick journalist blacklisted by McCarthy in the 50's, and his decision to set up his own weekly newsletter. Always satirical, revealing and provoking, Bruck's film is concise and consistent. Quasi-scientific screenings began with Scottese's satirical rework of *Six and Nineteen Men Streets*. French films screened included Robert Schnader's lightening documentary on Ankle, and the multi directed documentary on French guilt, *The Republic Did It*. *Dieu Sans Pitié* (drama) Guyver's *Un Homme Qui Danse* was an attempt to present Kefauver's submission in alternate terms — unsuccessfully I thought. It shows a drop-out student who decides to live in a state of suspended animation.

Other American titles included Clint Kimbro's *Young Nurses* in which Sam Fuller has a bit part, and a dose of 54 plot, with a rock field centre, called *Moon Country* Ltd, directed by Ronald Compton.

Perr was again ever present in the March screenings and this year Linda Lovelace presided over the first European screening of *Deep Throat*. *Throat* may be a social phenomenon, but two viewpoints clearly it is as a study of a film at all levels of acting

and production. Some porn was more pretentious, notably a pair of psycho thrillers, *Memories Within Miss Aggie* (by Gerry Davidson) and *Shadows Of A Lady* (by James Middleton). Others were amusing, especially Allen Roberts' *Paranoia* film which parodied *The Godfather* in style, and billed itself as the first blas movie in 70mm. Most notable was an opus entitled *Revolution* by an English Elmer Felson Stuart which, tongue in cheek, depicted the trials and tribulations of a blas-movie maker.

A last note perhaps should be for an eccentricity. Peter Fonda's exercise in screen geometry and futuristic parable, *Idaho Transit*, directly confronted the audience with today's problems of environment, nuclear war and so on, and presented solutions in a bizarre, fictitious setting. I found its failure in the United States hard to understand, and yet even here in Cannes only 30 people attended the screening.

Conclusions from Cannes are numerous and varied, and must have been heard already. That we should use it for the promotion of our production is obvious, but we should beware of early discouragement. A visit to Cannes reminds one, not only of the successful films, but also of those that will rarely again be screened. ■

Above: Dusan Makavejev's *SWEET MOVIE*.

Right: Federico Fellini behind the Minimax.

Centre Spread: Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1962 *RICCHI*



You (Giacca) is a Melbourne-based film director, writer and producer. He is presently producing and directing "Tender Loving Murder" for Xmas release.







Lyle Nall, Barry Crocker, Fiona Anderson in *RAZZA HOLDS THE DWN*

IN PRODUCTION

In view of the rapid growth of Australian production the co-ordinator of this column would be greatly assisted by individual producers and directors sending their production details to:

"In Production",
Cinema Papers,
37 Rotherham Street,
Richmond, Victoria 3121.

35 mm

ALVIN KIDEE ADAM

Co-directors David Block
Edwin Cassiano
Producers Tim Surnell
Associate Producer Alan Finney
Editor Edward McGeehan
Director of Photography Ron Gillingham
Music Brian Gale

Geef Drama Surnell, Alan Finney
Fiona Thorne, Cassiano
John Finney, Noel Ferrell,
Barry Sarnat, Alkali, Vanessa
Lath

Shooting January \$145,000

BAZZA HOLDS THE DWN

Producer Director Bruce Saward
Associate Producer John Scott
Director of Photography George Berg Humphries
Executive Producer John Saward
Music Peter Sarnat
Editor Will Anderson
Sound Don Bond

Cash Barry Crocker, Barry Humphries
Gemma Farnsworth, Ed Devereaux
John La Morte, Robert Latham,
Lyle Nall, Mary Blair, Prime
Minister Whelan and wife

Barry Crocker's adventures in Europe
Fiona and captured her love. Gillingham
original script based on the comic strip
character
Shooting Australia

BETWEEN THE WARE

Director Mike Thwaites
Script Frank Moonhouse
Production Mike Thwaites
Director of Photography Russell Bond
Sound Ron Harnfield
Editing Colin Redgrave, Peter Curran
Arthur Dignall, Julie Morris, Lyle Nall in a
quadrant between World War I and World
War II

THE INN OF THE DAMNED

Director, Script, Production Terry Boyle
Editor Paul Vary
Director of Photography Brian Fyfe
Music John Young
Starring Bruce Judith Anderson, Frank
Cord and John Walker
1998. Story of an American county farmer
who sets out to investigate the mysterious
disappearance of travellers on a lonely
stretch of the Mississippi coast.

PETERSEN

Director Tim Surnell
Script Brian Robinson
Director of Photography Ron Gillingham
Editing David Block
Music Peter Sarnat
Sound Brian Fyfe, Jackie Weaver
Arthur Dignall
An Australian goes to University and gets
personally involved with a Professor and
his wife

PROMISED WOMAN

Director and Photography Tom Cowan
Production Richard Brennan
Crew Graham Slaty (1st Assistant)
Gill Armstrong (Production Designer)
John Parnell (2nd Assistant)
Sue Sullivan (2nd Assistant)
Linda Wiggins (Sound)
Maurice Richard (Camera Assistant)

Story of a Greek migrant who comes to
Australia to face the harsh realities of an
arranged marriage

THE REMOVALISTS

Director Tony Jeffery
Producer Margaret Ford
Script David Williamson
Associate Producer Richard Brennan
Production Manager Ian Wilson
Assistant Director Mike Latham
Lighting Cameraman Graham Lind
Sound Operator Peter Jackson
Sound Recorder Ron Armstrong
Editor Tony Tang
Cuts Graeme Mitchell
Props Simon Armstrong
Wardrobe Liz Mitchell
Music Tony Buckley

Geef Peter Curran, John Hargreaves,
John Hargreaves, Kate Hargreaves,
Chris Newbold, Martin Wells
Story of a furniture removalists' contact
with a suburban police station
and the burger
Shooting Australia

SALUTE TO THE GREAT MCCARTHY

Director, production David Ewart
Script John Ewart, David Ewart
(from the original novel by Barry Oakley)
Executive Producer David Ewart
Director Richard Brennan
Associate Producers Alan Benjamin

Assistant Director Neil Hedderley
Visuals Agnieszka Kozlowska
Catering David Gillingham
Gripwork Liz Mitchell
Catering Lyn Baker
Director of Photography Bruce McLaughlin
Camera Operator Peter James
Editor John Scott
Sound Designer John Mulligan
Unit Manager Mike Martin

Geef John James (McCarthy), Sandra
McLoughlin, Judy Morris, Kate
Parnell, Dan in 1st, 2nd, 3rd
Hargreaves, Colin Smith, Barry
Humphries, Colin Smith, Peter
Armstrong, Bruce Gillingham,
Dyer, Mike Slaty, Peter Curran

The owner of a brilliant Australian Rules
club leaves from his country commitment to
his first league game. Based on the Barry
Crocker novel
\$145,000 budget
Shooting July/August

SUNDAY, TOD FAR AWAY

Director Ken Horne
Production Malcolm Smith
Script John Brignell
Editing Jack Thompson, Peter Curran
Music Colin, Bob Brignell, John Ewart,
Sean Scott
Sundays leading up to the Australia wide
1998. Director's 1998 film feature
inspired by the South Australian Development
Commission

THE TRUE STORY OF BEKING NELL

Director/Co-Producer Richard Franklin
Co-Producer Richard Franklin
Co-Editor Alan Woodard
Director of Photography Vincent Molloy
Assistant Cameraman Margaret Kozlowska
Crew Robert Young
Sound Recorder John Phillips
Production Manager Stan Phillips
Unit Manager Ray Ewart
1st Assistant Director Darryl Shaw
Catering Katherine Kozlowska
Catering Andrew Latham
Music Brian May

Geef George Lazarus, Mike Gillingham, Alkali
Sullivan, Bill McKee, Mike McKee,
Nashville, Bill McKee
Based on the original poem by Robert
Benson, about Dinkie Dink and Mexico
Pete's search for the elusive wumpus
Shooting March 1998
Shooting June/July



Christine Anest, Josh Thompson and David Phillips in *FETTERED*, Tim Barden's latest production



Julia Weaver and Peter Cassino in the Box of David Williamson's play *THE RENOVATORS*.



Robert Walker stars in the "Whimsical Passage" in John Latham's "Mondo Can" at Academy AUSTRALIA AFTER DARK.



Gauguin (Starred in RAINBOW FARM).

IN PRODUCTION

16 mm

CHILDREN OF THE MOON

Production and Director: Bob Walls
Assistant Director: Wayne Smith
Lighting: Catherine
Sound: Lloyd Carls
Starring: John Outpost, Alan Malley
Short feature. A young man returning from city life meets a naive and un-
derstood, substantial, uneducated and
spiritual change.
Shooting: March, Aust.

ORNIAL

Director: Script: Scott Murray
Director of Photography: Gordon Glen
Sound: Richard
Starring: Flora Russell, Ross Lister and
Vivian Russell
Editing: James Applegate
Length: 45 mins.
A study of an 18-year-old girl's attempts to
reveal sexual relationships.

EPIGENIC

Feature length documentary on sexual
diseases being directed by Brian Tremblay
Shooting for Hepatitis Film

THE FIRM MEN

Music producer: director: John Bulpin
Lighting: Catherine
Camera: Assistant: Steve Trankus
Camera: Assistant: Terry Judith
Music: Richard

Sound: Richard
Sound: Assistant: Wayne Smith
Camera: Assistant: Anna Francis
Editor: Terry Patterson

Cast: Peter Gunning, Eliza Chapman,
Paul Campbell, Lynn McBride,
Max Giller, Grace Spence
A middle-aged businessman joins a
mysterious paper business organization
known as "The Firm". The firm is in fact a
political organization engineering certain
changes in its members. Length: 100
minutes
Release date: July/August

IN SEARCH OF ANNA

A play being made for a TV series by the
"TV" dynamics Eileen Stone and Hugh
Kearns, starring Chris Hayman

ON THE TRACK OF UNKNOWN ANIMALS

Gordon Glen, Keith Patterson
Filmed record of the search for the
very foundations of the Australian
wilderness. From Australia's largest
wilderness yet to be discovered?

THE WORLD OF OGS

Director, cameramen: Frederick B.
Robertson
Sound: Don Connelly
Editor: Norman MacDonald
Robert Lawton
A series of 10 vignettes each of 10 minutes
length.

RAINBOW FARM

Director: Producer: Rod Whitham
Producer: Brian Smith
Photographer: Gordon Glen
Starring: John Outpost, Alan Malley,
Gavin Smith

AUSTRALIA AFTER DARK

Director: producer: John Latham
Director of Photography: John Latham
Editor: Gavin Whitham
Assistant Editor: Jack Brinkworth
Underwriter/Photography: Ben Grah
Director: John Latham
An Australian "Mondo Can" video the
world. The unknown, the unknown, the
unknown and the unknown in Australia
Hosking Productions
Shooting: July/August

Video

THE VAGUUM

Director: March Fabian
Production: John Kirk
Music: Paul Tiller
Music: Richard
Track: Mary Jane Ford

A 45 minute color video production
Starring: Sylvia and the Byrdell, Gary
Muller, and a new young couple. A series
of vignettes on the theme of society
Transitions for truth reveal a hidden search
for the good times
Release: 1978, August 1978



Charles O'Connell

Man: O'Brien in Duck-Eye Duck

PRODUCTION REPORT

THE TRUE STORY OF ESKIMO NELL

RICHARD FRANKLIN

Co-Producer/Director

When Richard Franklin left Monash University he went to Consolidated Film Productions, where he worked as an assistant cameraman. He then spent two years doing the film course at the University of Southern California. After returning, he worked at the ABC and spent a year directing *Homicide* at Crawford Productions. Over the last twelve months, apart from pre-production work on *Eskimo Nell*, Franklin has occasionally lectured on film, for the Association of Teachers of Film Appreciation.

The following interview was conducted by Gordon Gilman and Scott Murray at the location office, Ballarat, after a day's shooting on *Sovereign Hill*.

FRANKLIN: I was in Sydney producing the jumping jumper of *Lavender Bay* with Gerald Ryan when Danny Dyson came along with a tape recorded version of the poem "Eskimo Nell". I thought it fantastic stuff but nothing much happened for about three or four months until one day I just decided to knock up a treatment. Instead of a third-eye Dick who screws 40 women in one go, I came up with a one-eyed Ritz character who wanders around having sexual fantasies about an imaginary Eskimo Nell. The first draft was actually set in the original locations of the poem, the Rio Grande and Alaska. I took the script with me to the States in 1972 but couldn't get anywhere. The Hollywood agents, who are the first people you have to approach are really unbelievable. They'd say, "Eskimo Nell's a cold script is it? Like snow and ice?" I'd say, "Oh well there are a few snow scenes, the play does take place in Alaska." "Forget it," he'd say. "They made Ice Palace and it bombed, they made Ice Barons Zerkos and it bombed. No one wants cold script." That was about as far as you'd get. So I dragged my tail and wound up back to Australia in late 1972. That is suddenly occurred to me that the thing could happen just as easily in the Australian gold fields, and the more I worked on it the better the whole idea seemed to become. So it became a tale of Dead-Eye Dick who had started searching for Eskimo Nell in the Klondike, followed her to the Californian gold rush of 1849, and ended up here on the Ballarat gold fields in 1852. I then sent off a draft to the Australian Film Development Corporation and it was rejected as being pornography (what of a socially redeeming value). However, on Tom Stacey's advice, I went to Sydney armed with letters and I met that three assassins, showed

them a series of reels I had taken at Sovereign Hill and other settings, and you told them the story. It didn't seem very exciting to me but they all changed their minds. Originally there were three assassins, a couple of American P.R. people and a film critic. I said to them that since they had these people and none of them in the film so far, they should get someone in the marketing side and see what he thinks of the idea, because if nothing else it has commercial potential. The two marketing operators came back and they were really good so we had two for two and three against them. As I've said, I met those three assassins and all three of them changed their minds, which was basic. They said, more or less, that it's very hard to decide what to back as they get scripts submitted from everyone, and as they had never heard of me they just knocked it back. Anyway at that point we put a full budget with prospectus, and applied for money to make the film. They then gave us a script development grant, and at that point I approached Alan Hoggard and asked him whether he would work on the thing. The A.F.D.C. were very happy with Hoggard's work on *Alvin Purple*.

GP: They suggested how did they?

FRANKLIN: They either suggested in some or they mentioned how very happy they were with his work. I thought if this will keep them happy, then great. I think they are delighted with the work that Alan's done on the screenplay. The dialogue he has written is so far superior to my own it's amazing. Structurally the story is mine, but the dialogue is far. I really think Hoggard's a very good writer.

GP: What happened with the A.F.D.C. now?

FRANKLIN: Well this second draft was then sent up to them. It was almost all done in a weekend because

the A.F.D.C. meets only once a month. They then re-assessed the new draft which they all thought was great. Some of the scenes they said were improved but only had the number of the page changed. It had something to do with Hoggard's name being up it I think. That there was another draft done just prior to shooting, but that was only done because Alan and I felt that in the second draft had gone so well we'd do just another. The only problem was that at that time he was getting so covered under with the *Alvin Purple* script that we were limited with time, but I feel the script is a very strong one. We have been doing some improving, but basically haven't fiddled with the dialogue at all.

GP: What was the next step after you got the A.F.D.C. money?

FRANKLIN: The A.F.D.C. gave us \$16,000 as the condition that we get an Australian distributor at whatever financially involved, which they felt would ensure distribution. Ron Bunch and I then approached all the distributors and Filmways finally agreed to come in on the thing. So the film is financed jointly by the A.F.D.C. who ended up putting in \$165,000, by Filmways and by some private syndicated investment.

GP: How did you get on to the private investors, through a contact bank?

FRANKLIN: Oh, through every avenue. Really a cussie to the point where finally you have to lay down your pride and walk up to anyone who you think has got any money and just say "G'day".

GP: I lead us a good life!

FRANKLIN: Yes, that's right. You do it and that's all I can say. I could do it again, again because I have done it and that's the only way to find out. There is only a reasonably small group of people who will put money into these speculative areas, and so you absolutely find yourself knocking tracks in every direction, which can be highly embarrassing. It's highly embarrassing at the same time though, because I have found lots of times that I'd be with one investor and saying "I've got this great idea" and he'd say, "Oh yes, I heard about this from who's his name - oh yes - it was his partner last week." Unusually it's not so much that they can look for us, it's far that we go looking for us, and then someone comes and they bring a friend.

However, it is very hard finally to get them to eventually put pen to paper. The Friday before we started shooting on the *Manday* I was in Sydney all day waiting for a contract to be signed while the crew and equipment were sitting in Melbourne waiting for me to get back. The first convention Vince and I had about the photographic style of the film was while we were doing the first shot. That's not entirely true but it's sort of the way it worked ultimately.

GP: That's the private sector, what about Filmways?

FRANKLIN: Well Filmways have the Australian distribution rights. We are also negotiating Canadian rights for the film. In fact I think we have been offered more in the pre-production stage for the Canadian distribution than they get for *Care That Ain't Paris* in its limited stage, which is quite nice. I suppose it can be explained because Robert Service, to whom *Eskimo Nell* is attributed, lived most of his life in Canada and part of our script takes place in the mythical frozen north which is the Klondike. The Canadians were willing to put some money into the production and filmed in production locations in Canada, so we are going to take advantage of this and shoot our Canadian sequences in Canada. We can shoot them for the same amount as we could in Australia, if not less. This also opens up the Canadian and possibly the U.S. markets. Basically I am confident we will recover our production costs in Australia and make the profit overseas, which I think is the philosophy all producers ought to aim at in this country. Ultimately I think we will be able to aim at an international market and we will be able to make more specialised types of film. We have got to make the most commercial type of material until we have access to the overseas markets. I think ultimately you have to tempt the distributors, which is a hard thing to do I guess, but when you want to make a film you have to. Because Filmways are involved financially in the production side of the film, I feel this will protect the other various investors. I think that it is a gesture of good faith and it is specific that an Australian-owned distributor is making that sort of gesture. The exhibition deal is something over which we have a right to vote. The A.F.D.C. police all this fairly carefully which is good. I have got to watch the selling of this



© Ochoa

Shooting the mine explosion sequence in Bolivia. Director Richard Franklin (left) with cinematographer Vince Morone (second from left) and second cameraman John Hoffman



© Ochoa

Sergio Lorenzi at Museo Piro



© Ochoa

Sergio Lorenzi points gun at Vince Morone and Richard Franklin

film is proud of my own interests as well as to learn about that whole end of the industry which is ultimately where you sink or swim, because after all you are only as good as your last picture — and this is my first.

GP: If we can now leave the production side. You have done a lot of film teaching over the years. What influence has this critical background had on what you've done since?

FRANKLIN: It always stages me so that a lot of film makers are more interested in other film makers, in film criticism and that whole area. I am certainly not into the very metaphorical side of film criticism though. My favorite criticism is on the more factual level, just talking about the facts of the art rather than the philosophy of it. I am amazed at how many people involved in the film industry are not also involved in film club activities and have many people in the film clubs don't know film.

GP: This is true even as to though **FRANKLIN:** Yes, although I find that the film club members are all fairly instantly involved in the history of film. The young American film makers are all smart buffs, whereas here there is a real gap between the film writers/people and the film making people, and I meet my first in some ways I enjoy the company of the film criticism people and the film writers. They are two entirely different schools. I have never been able to evaluate what influences the critical area has had on me. I am constantly returning to things, but not in the Peter Bogdanovich way. I find that the most advantages that I can imagine having, would be a very derogative film making attitude, one that would be to evaluate different things. "Now I am going to do an Howard Hawks slow cloning scene, and now watch this for a Hitchcockian high shot." I wouldn't ever go to that extent, but I think you're shot me were doing today of Peter and Dick meeting in the airplane in the rain, and the sound of the buzzer, is straight out of *The Birds* and I said so to Man at the time. I find Mass pleasant to work with because he's also been fairly involved in film criticism so you know, and it's rather like Vince as one of these film makers who must make a movie and I can say to him "Right, I can sort of get it, I realize that shot looking down this tunnel, sort of *Long Voyage Home* like Vince." I can't imagine how you can make films without reference to the critical standards and forms of the past, present and future. But as I say my attitudes to criticism are much more along the formal lines than the art lines.

GP: Do you plan your shooting before you get on the set?

FRANKLIN: Well I do normally, although when it is largely your own sense I find that you've got most of it in your head anyway and so you don't do as much. I have been improving more the I used to, as I think about the Hitchcock-Lubitsch style, planning every gesture and so on. I've found that working with actors like Max, you can use so much that they are capable of giving if you are just mechanical about it. I find



Gordon Light

Dorcas Hall

that sometimes scenes work better if you rehearse a lot of your scenes and then think about where you are going to put your camera and how you are going to do it.

GP: Do you shoot many masters?

FRANKLIN: Some scenes I have played through almost completely in masters. Some of the actors we've got particularly the long dialogue scenes, I don't feel worried setting up the way we would in takes. We just a beautiful scene with Mike McClure and Mia Farrow sitting under a window and he is talking about the French south and she wants to go to bed with him, and it's really quite beautiful — if you can imagine going to bed with David-Eye Dick. That scene of dialogue was about three quarters of an hour held there in a two-shot, I didn't cut it. I was planning to do a slow reveal in but it just seemed so delicious when we did it. I just sat at the camera up and filmed, but I probably wouldn't have been gone in to do that if John Ford hadn't done it.

I am being a little anticongratulatory on some things and occasionally we have had to, because of weather and things, finally shoot a pick up a scene and then a slightly different master angle. There is only one scene that I can think of where I have shot multiple coverage and that was simply because we had Lindsay Bond down from Society and he was only here for a limited amount of time and I knew we couldn't afford the luxury of a rebob, so I made sure I had enough coverage on it. I will have to sit through on the editing of that more than I would on another film but then I have been looking through the camera all the time on film and that's not something I normally do.

GP: How much does your potential audience influence what you are doing?

FRANKLIN: Well, completely really. I think do things that I don't think the audience will respond to on one level or another — is that I don't think I ever do. People say they could make movies for themselves but I don't do that at all. I'm one of those cats who likes to get up in front of people and make a fool of myself. I am always playing to somebody and

that's the way I feel when I am dancing. I try to think myself into an over-the-top dance position, where they just sit there and say "Oh yes I really like that." If you start thinking about what you like and not about who you are trying to reach, I think you have no hope of communicating and without communicating I reckon the whole exercise is dead.

GP: Are you playing back of the camera on a day-to-day level?

FRANKLIN: I mean I think that we've got some really fine dialogue of a Kuznetsov scene which I am really delighted with. The dialogue I hope is in the Lubchuk tradition of humorous dialogue which was always a sort of subtle cross-reference. As I'm figuring it is actually more but I think that it is something Australian audiences are coming to expect. It was a little embarrassing living with great crowds of men and people standing around at the time but I don't think they agree to what you are saying.

GP: The poem is very lovely. How have you reacted to it?

FRANKLIN: Well I guess we'll get an "R" Certificate, although there are lots of things about the film that would only get an "M". Thinking something with humor makes you get away with just about anything, at least in it is the right sort of humor. That same, for example, of film and Max under the window, which is a beautifully tender scene, is underlain by the fact that Maxine Peirce is looking this cheek in the other room right behind them. So we have Max demonstrating his second tendency while in the background Maxine Peirce is going through an almost aesthetic performance of how to screw a girl 25 different ways in three seconds, which could be interpreted as pornography on one level but on another level it seems to be making some sort of comment on sexual attitudes, which I think is extremely relevant. At the same time, and this is something we're only been able to do in films in the last few years, it is very funny and people laugh when they see this erotic performance of sex going on in the background. It is done reasonably subtly but there are plenty of tits and things flying round I suppose. I feel you have to be

true to the spirit of the headiness of the poem and the doing that the poem has, which I think the film is lacking today, is this sort of Mr. Mayle's an acceptant thing or something, I don't know, but to me the poem "Bismillah" had that flavor. It is a reasonably controversial thing to try to do and I think that one of the keynotes of modern film making is that you have to be controversial or so much's going to come. They will not stay home and watch television.

GP: I think there is an obvious parallel with something like *Alvin Purple*. What do you think of *Alvin Purple*, and is the humor similar to what you are trying to get?

FRANKLIN: I wish we could talk about an Australian film, something a little more distant you know.

GP: No you can't. However as long as we know it's *Alvin Purple*, just call it something you like.

FRANKLIN: Well I think *Alvin Purple* has a more sort of dishonesty in it, which is that Alvin Purple is what David-Eye Dick thinks he is — which is completely untrue. I am pretty sure that Alvin Purple is being read to a sexual hour by the sort of contemporary sexual attitudes, which is probably what we all are. Really it's no so bad. I think *Alvin Purple* is an acceptable film but I think that it could be distorted. I think it lacks a certain quality. I am pretty sure I don't see any film having any more sensibility to *Alvin Purple* other than the fact that it's a lovely "R" Certificate Australian comedy.

GP: I think from what you were saying before Lindsay Neil will rely on a certain sort of embarrassed humor.

FRANKLIN: You mean embarrassed?

GP: Well yes, because they will be sitting with a whole lot of other people and all these things are going on up on the screen that they would never dare talk about. What is the difference between that sort of humor and the sort of humor which is in *Alvin Purple*?

FRANKLIN: Probably not much difference. I was making a general point about the sort of humor that the Lindsay Neil poem has. I think perhaps when we hearing low voices come only the screen and we have the sort of the post-birth lights and we hear "When a man grows old and his balls go cold and the end of his crack starts to dry, he is slightly ashamed to be slightly ashamed about his balls but they are the average opening of *Humiliate* too. Most openings are designed to do that. And that I think the audience will be so more subconsciously that people are reluctant to watch when they are looking at *The Banned*. I think you are saying I think is that sort of humor is sort of a bit lame, and does an audience just automatically of there and watch it and burn. In a film like *Alvin Purple* I am sure they do. In our film I don't think that they will only do that, I think they will be involved with characters. Tits and balls will become secondary to some extent.

Gordon Light is a lighting technician at the Metro-City, Los Angeles University. He is presently producing a documentary on Australian films.

VINCE MONTON

Director of Photography

Vincent Monton worked for some years at Crawford Productions shooting *Madcock Police* and *Homicide*, including the first color episode. Monton is now preparing for the television series *Cash & Company*. The following interview was conducted by Gordon Glenn and Scott Marzay on location in Australia.

CP: Originally you planned to shoot *Edna* Hall on the Aun 35 BL. Did you do any sound tests?

MONTON: Yes.

CP: Was it quiet enough to do interior dialogue?

MONTON: No, not in a small room.

CP: Even with the soft blimp?

MONTON: I didn't see the soft blimp but there is an accessory blimp available that apparently cuts down the noise quite a lot. Most sound guys who have used it complain about the noise quite bitterly. It's a bit of a disappointment because you've got a big heavy camera and a little tiny 35 Arriflex and the difference is big sync. Well if you can't get big sync with a 35 BL because of the noise, you may as well be shooting it normally, especially if you're going to post sync it. Why screw around? What I would like to get my little hands on is a Panaflex and I believe that Panaflexes are going to bring some into the country. They have got the American agency. They really are quiet.

CP: Balcock & Copping bought a 35 BL to do *Aria*. Have they had problems?

MONTON: I don't know. It just gives the sound guy a few problems. **CP:** It gives the cameraman a few problems too, because if it's noisy you end up with heavy blankets over your head.

MONTON: That is exactly what I am trying. Sometimes, for example, you only have the normal 2C and 120

blimp. Well cut it much heavier than the other so sometimes rather than have a discussion with the sound man it is quicker just to put the big camera on, even if he just wants to record footstep. It is heavier, but it is not that much harder to handle.

CP: With the 35 BL?

MONTON: Yeah I sense where it really starts to effect you is when you start doing head held shots. There is no way you can do head held big sync shot, unless you use a 35 BL or a Panaflex. As I've said I am a little disappointed in the 35 BL in terms of noise. As a cameraman's camera it is beautiful, it is just great. Arriflex claim they are quietest of all.

CP: How do you find using the head held with the 120 blimp?

MONTON: No worries at all. Originally I wanted a Steadicam-Wolf head and I ended up using an O'Connor 100 because that is all that was available. It is quite successful, no problems whatsoever. The Wolf is also a head held but it is better balanced, a little easier to hold and it's a more modern version, a more updated one than the O'Connor. However the O'Connor 100 is quite good for the money we have got, which is the lighter 120. The 120 superblimp, which carries the zoom, is a heavier blimp and I wouldn't advise anyone to use an O'Connor 100 for that. There have been no shots that are giving us any problems, so I feel in some ways it is faster than a ground head.

CP: How do you find having to use

the inverter?

MONTON: That's been a real pain, but we have got around most of it by just plugging into mains. The mains all over Australia are 3 phase power, so whenever we are shooting there we can just plug in.

CP: What's the problem with the inverter though?

MONTON: Oh, just weight. If I am doing a long tracking shot and using a small but I can just throw it on the dolly and take it with me. With the inverter I have to get a car battery, which is quite heavy, and then string leads — but it can't come with me. Then as the leads get longer the drop off in voltage gets greater.

Sometimes you get such a lot of lead the camera won't turn over. There is just not enough getting through to the camera. We have had that happen a few times.

CP: So it either runs at sync speed or not at all?

MONTON: That tends to be the situation. A few times when it just hasn't turned over we have shortened the leads and it has turned over. So where possible we go on mains. The sound guys seem happier about it too because they reckon that they have done some sync tests and they must think that while equipment runs on a battery on mains than off batteries. It is easier for us too as when we really get into handies we use the Cine 60 and that runs off normal Aun batteries. It's quite a light one, good for location.

CP: You spent some money in Sweden. How do these new cameras with the American make?

MONTON: I saw in Sweden that most, or nearly all, directors of photography operated themselves. It is almost a tradition. In all of Sweden I didn't see a ground head, everybody used Steadicam-Wolf heavy

duty find heads even on big Arriflex blimps. Some Nykvist who is quite a cameraman, [he just] was the Academy for Cines & Whispers, operates for himself. It is the trouble there to operate for yourself. In the American and English traditions you have an operator. From my point of view I think that in Australia we should be moving more to the Swedish model, because I think that our budgeting and our type of films are closer to what is being made in Sweden and France than in England and America. England and America are English speaking countries so we are therefore more exposed to more of their publications. We shouldn't have to use an operator simply because an American production style you always have an operator and a ground head. Do American productions you also use a Mitchell with a 1000 lb magazine, which you don't see on Australian film crews. The budgeting is very different too. We are talking about \$150,000 - \$200,000 while the Americans are talking about \$300,000 - \$500,000. On our small crews an operator starts to become a luxury.

CP: Do you like operating yourself?

MONTON: Yes I do. It is very rewarding to see what is going on through the actual eye piece. I always get a bit personal when I see action going on and all I can do is try and imagine what's going through the camera. On this film I ended up without an operator because of our plan to use the 35 BL and to keep the crew as light and mobile as possible. What happened eventually was that we didn't use the 35 BL because the two extra magazines from England didn't arrive, and it is stupid to do a feature on only two magazines. So we had to go back to the conven-



Shooting with 1200 in main street of Bowengy Hill. Vince Monton in crowd heads camera.



First Robin costume makeup by Miss Giffen.

tical Artificia 120 Hertz, but still without an operator. I went in with the option that if it was slowing the production down, and causing too much weight on me we would get an operator, but so far it has worked quite successfully.

GP: What effects are you looking for in lighting, Robbie Noid?

MONTEON: On this movie all our cameras are supposedly in fly air lenses that would generally give off a softer light, a less harsh light that you've overhead contemporary lighting. So where possible we are not trying to establish a light source, an oil lamp or something, and create the impression that the lighting is coming from there.

GP: Oil lamps with just the wicks burning, or have you put gels in front?

MONTEON: Just with the wick burning. Robbie Young has rigged a few lamps with a 120 watt projector lamp reflected behind so that when we don't shoot up against it, well they do give off a spot of glow to create the impression that they are better than they really are. Inside I have generally kept away from using quartz lamps in any light because I think they are a little too harsh for this particular movie. So we are keeping it down to Fresnel's and some, where possible, use Paracans in a softer effect. I am generally flying as softly as possible, with bounce light, but establishing key light where possible. Up to now we have nearly always put quarter 81 gels in front of our key lights to create a warmer glow. So far the results have been very nice.

GP: So you have no, or any, hand in designing the color scheme for the set?

MONTEON: Not as much as I would have liked to because there was a problem with our set designer so that about two weeks before the actual film started rolling the set designer who was supposed to do the film couldn't. So a new one came in and it was a bit of a pain, I tried to stay in contact with the set designer as much as possible but generally it was a little bit out of control. I must say though, that up to now it has been fairly good and we have been in agreement.

GP: What colors are you going for in this?

MONTEON: Generally we are trying to give the impression that there is warmth inside because we have played all our night exteriors in cold and gritty as possible. A great deal of the night exteriors take part in the snow and we are trying to get a very, very cold effect.

GP: How do you do that?

MONTEON: Generally lighting in that way I am using quarter blue gels in front of the lamps to get a slightly colder feel, and in some cases putting the thick in development.

GP: Do you worry very much about color temperature on the set or do you let the film worry about it?

MONTEON: I think you have to worry a bit of a lot about color temperature but quite frankly this falls into your gaffer's area. It is his responsibility to check that the lamps are running at the correct voltage. A



Shooting exterior locations in Sydney

lot of these problems have disappeared since we started to use quartz lamps. With quartz lamps, if you find in the correct voltage they will give you the right color temperature, unlike the older type of lamp which was yellow.

GP: Is this because they don't blacken round the globe?

MONTEON: Exactly. They will either give you the correct color temperature or just go. All our best to do is get a voltmeter meter and check that the right voltage is feeding into that lamp — it's a very simple operation. You can't leave too much up to your fate because, although they can correct for an over all timing in a shot, if you put your lamps on that some are running too hot and some are running too low, the labor have got to decide what they are going to correct for. You might have your key lamps running to the right color temperature, and your fill running to the wrong color temperature, and it is very hard for them to start correcting because one side of a guy's face is one color temperature and the other side is another and they have got to strike a compromise. They can do that but there is always something that is going to go wrong, like the backgrounds, or their faces, or one side of their face. Generally I think this problem has been eliminated to a great degree.

GP: Do you take any part in the grading and the color balancing of your final print?

MONTEON: On this film I hope to and I usually like to follow it through, particularly on something like this. Also with 16 mm negative because there's such a wide latitude, and the labs can do a lot with a release print. For example, Colorfilm are printing everything I am shooting at 25.25-25 — right down the middle. If you are over or under exposed, or your color temperature is wrong, they can pull it back. We did a shot today that was very late in the day and it could have a slight pinky tinge to it, but you don't worry too much. It may be a couple of hundred degrees out Kelvin, but they can still pull it back. It's good to know you have it up your sleeve but it doesn't create a good impression when you are sitting there waiting

rushes with the producers and investors, and suddenly a shot comes up that's a very red or blue. You try to closely as possible to get a good result. Robbie Young and I are both trying to get absolute correction and get exactly what we are looking for.

GP: Have you got special lenses of any kind or are you using a standard set?

MONTEON: The most common and is a Sinarflex's and comes with a range of lenses from 18 to 120 mm. I think there are eight in the set and they are all matched Taylor Hobson's color correct and are all T 2.3. I was trying to get my hands on the faster lenses, about 2.1, which Paracans have, but it was very difficult. I have said just about every lens, as well as the 25 to 250 mm. I don't like to restrict myself to lenses. Most of it would have been shot between 25 and 30 mm, reserving the 35 and 45 mm lenses for some wide shots.

GP: Does Richard specify the lens he wants to use?

MONTEON: No, I will usually work on and know if it's a wide shot or a tight shot and how far we can get away with the current. Usually we decide on the lens with the director's viewfinder. I find that a great help especially when you're using a heavy camera because it is backtracking shifting a camera three feet forward, three feet back and so on. It does help determine exactly what lens we want and where we want the camera positioned.

GP: Do you think a director's viewing glass is a fair indication of lens characteristics?

MONTEON: No. It can give you what your intention will be, but it doesn't give you things like distortion. When you are a technician lens you start to throw the background out of focus and pick up the subject matter. But it is an aid, particularly for the director. I usually insist on the director having a look through the viewfinder just to see what the lens is doing to his shot if there is any doubt about it.

GP: Is there a particular lens which you like?

MONTEON: On this film I have been trying to use longer lenses like 40 mm. up, only because I particularly like the characteristics, especially throwing the background out of

focus. I am trying to do that as much as possible. On a lot of the outdoor stuff we have been using wide lenses, particularly as we are shooting for a 165 format and wide lenses on a wide screen just tend to look good. I think you get through a little bit when you start shooting like this you do for television. Focus are just too big and you know there has got to be a good reason for getting a closer on a theatre screen. It is just enormous, whereas on television it is quite conventional to do a close up.

GP: Did you have a discussion about the 165 format with Richard before you started, or was it just assumed that you would do that as the result?

MONTEON: We talked about it a lot because originally we were thinking of shooting in wide screen, which is rather Paracans 46 (2.35 to 1) or Techniscope. I think we were drawn into this mainly because it is a good film with a lot of outdoor stuff and you start to get compared with a western. The wider the Paracans are, we looked at Techniscope. So we found both options to be fairly available in this country at the moment. From the point of view of support of cameras, lenses we found that we had to have two cameras to shoot the production with, otherwise if our major by type cameras broke down the production would come to a halt. So we just opted for the conventional negative size 833 with our viewfinder marked up to 165. We framed them for 165 and just trusting the screen process — and as far that hasn't been very successful.

GP: You must leaving it up to the process?

MONTEON: Yes. Well this is one of the dangers of it. I find it very annoying if you shoot 165 and give a full negative to a process house. He can risk up and risk down and change the framings all the time and consequently change how much information ends up on that screen. If it's a very clearly framed shot where a certain piece of information has to be included, it gets a little dangerous leaving it up to the process house to determine your framing. I would like to see as release this film with a 165 cropped print. I don't know if it would be possible, this is mostly the distributor's decision. I think most distributors would like to have prints that can either be shown on 165 or 163, because in Europe it is quite unusual to show a 163 print. You mostly show at 166, and even Paracans films that are shot for 166 are projected in this country 165. It's just a trend. In America and Australia we start to go for a wider screen. It is a dangerous line you start to go to for a virtually two formats, and also you have got to consider the television print which could be a 133 format. So you find yourself trying to keep two things in mind at the same time. I would like to have only one format on any frame and forget the rest. However we always had to consider the television format, about whether or not it will be in shot on the television print, or whether we can go with this, or can't go with that. But it is not a great problem, it can be resolved. ■

JOHN PHILLIPS

Sound Recordist

John Phillips, with Franklin and Manton, has worked at Crawford Productions. He has also recorded the sound on John Murray's *The Naked Beauty* and Tim Barnall's *Alvin Purple*. Phillips is now involved with post-production work at Commercial Film Laboratories, where he was interviewed by Peter Bellby and Scott Murray.

CP: What sort of equipment were you using on *The Tree Story* of Ealing? **NP:**

PHILLIPS: It was basically standard. I had a Magna 4.2 with the pre-amp and a tape a third channel. That was all we required on the production as we only used a maximum of three mikes. We didn't require any great mikes set up.

CP: What about the mikes themselves?

PHILLIPS: We used mainly Schoenberger 813's and the Electrovoice DL42, which is a very good microphone. In a situation with noisy backgrounds, especially in regard to a period film, we had to use the Schoenberger to bring out the presence. It seemed to kill the voice above the backgrounds a little bit. Worked very well.

CP: You weren't using racks or neck racks?

PHILLIPS: We had neck mikes but not a radio mike set up, though I wish I had. I think they are essential these days. Once a good radio mike set up is established in Australia we can use our own VSP.

CP: You read that radio mikes are used extensively in the United States and Britain but they have virtually no use in Australia. What's the reason?

PHILLIPS: The P.M.G. in Australia have allocated a band to radio mikes which is unfortunately the same one that taxi and walkie-talkies use. So you get this great interference problem, whereas in America they have got a VHF frequency and there is no interference. They can just use them as they like, it's great.

CP: Is this band going to be changed at any time?

PHILLIPS: They are trying to I believe.

CP: You mentioned the problem of unwanted background noise in a

period film. Do you overcome that by trying to filter out the rumble on location, or do you leave it to either the transfer or mix?

PHILLIPS: Once upon a time you used to come back from location and equisize it during the transfer. These days you have a nice clean track for the mix. The technique at present is to get it through flat on transfer and equisize on the mix. If you have got a mixer on location it must have good equalisation. The Smith & Cross attenuators allow your low frequencies but never allows for any frequency correction as the highs.

CP: It doesn't have a booster?

PHILLIPS: No.

CP: Does it have a mid-range boost?

PHILLIPS: Only overall, not each channel. This means that if you get

one microphone in a good position but the other is placed in the earth somewhere, you need to boost the very high frequencies and cut some of the bottom end. You can't do it with the Smith & Cross.

CP: The main value of being able to equisize as the mix appears to be the manipulation of the frequency of each microphone so that you can more closely match them, which is what I thought the Smith & Cross mixer was doing.

PHILLIPS: The presence boost is over all channels, but it attenuates the lows on each channel. You need to keep high frequency control on all channels.

CP: Why is it considered preferable to equisize during the mix, rather than on the transfer?

PHILLIPS: I don't know why, it just seems to be the thing these days. I did some of the transfers on *Hell* here and I sort of twiddled the knobs on the Pullex and the Little Deeper in try and correct it a bit. I think it's a much better idea to correct on transfer whereas *Pearl Harbor*

prefers to do it during the mix.

CP: Bob Gardner, Crawford Productions, argues that rather than leave the transfers in someone who doesn't get an overall view of the sound, doing it only in bits and pieces, it is better to leave it to the mixer who can judge the film overall, and use his relation to the image.

PHILLIPS: Of course with rack and roll mixing it's so much easier. Once upon a time you had to do a whole thousand foot run in the mix, but that's all changed now. When you mix with a full roll you haven't got time to do anything about equisizing, you have just got to worry about your balance and all that. However with rack and roll you can run it back as many times as it is needed to correct the sound equalisation, and then continue on. But I think a good transfer mixer can balance out the track overall.

CP: You recorded both on location and in the studio. What sort of studio sets did you work on?

PHILLIPS: *Demolition*. One was an indoor shoot in *Belmont* which was as cheap as hell. All the seats were removed and there were squaky boards with no drapery at all. A theatre of course relies on its audience to absorb into. We put baffles and pieces of felt around the place and we tried to use some old sets to break it up. Fortunately there wasn't very much dialogue there.

CP: If you use a location sound recorder walking into a situation like that, what's the best you can do?

PHILLIPS: Oh well, you shouldn't really walk into a situation like that. It is up to the people finding the location to choose good locations for sound. If you find a situation like that you just have to use baffles and felt, and hope you can cut it down a bit.

CP: Were there any locations that gave you particular problems? You have mentioned background noise.

PHILLIPS: *Sovereign*. *Hell* was unfortunately on the top of a hill and all the traffic from *Belmont* sort of leaked up. Fortunately it was all the one frequency and we were able to dip it out during the transfer without



Sound Recordist John Phillips

affecting the dialogue. The Exhibition Buildings, where we did the interior of Nell's hotel, had such enormous background noise you could hardly hear the dialogue on some occasions. We were able to dip that out too because it was also the one best frequency.

CP: Given that you were getting these sorts of problems, did the director attempt to assist in any way, like the lightning is shot to allow the microphone in closer?

PHILLIPS: Richard is very much a master shot director, he had very few close-ups in the film. There was no one pushing him to go any tighter. Anyway, it is better to have total background noise than three rather early jumps to sound.

CP: Before the production commenced did Franklin discuss with you the sort of sound he wanted on Nell? Did he prefer location sound with its problems than post-synchronous?

PHILLIPS: He was very worried about post-synch from the start. Quite often we found a situation of fading light and he would ask for wild line. Richard was very aware of the problems of post-synch, drastically as well as economically. He wanted to use all the way.

CP: Do you have in post sync any?

PHILLIPS: I have post-synch sound on three scenes. One was where the horses are kicking the curbs. Curbs are so loud with their mooing that it's just inaudible, you know. It was just about audible but I thought it better to post sync it.

CP: Do you know if your wild line was to do?

PHILLIPS: I hope so. I want to make sure that they will be.

CP: How do you overcome the problem of separating very loud effects from dialogue? Do you attempt to muffle the sound effects or simply concentrate on getting the dialogue, adding the effects later?

PHILLIPS: I try to muffle all the line I carry around. Army tanks and great layers of felt. If we do a trucking shot I always try and lay felt. It's also up to the artist, and generally they are very co-operative. They close down very quietly and so on.

CP: Ken Hammond has mentioned that he has a technique for recording effects which employs a gun mike held at a distance, captures noise like an electrostatic mic, the theory being that the gun mike picks up the gun of the sound effect while the Electrovoice picks up the surrounding atmosphere.

PHILLIPS: It's a really good idea. **CP:** Do you use it yourself?

PHILLIPS: Usually I record the noise. I lay the boom line rather than having a second track. If you are doing a footstep track for a tracking shot and the legs it such that you can't get your mike close, get in as tight as you can and take a wild track as well. Mix them later on.

CP: Do you have any assistants on Nell? Besides the boom-ops?

PHILLIPS: I could have had an extra if I had wanted, but I'd sooner work as a two-man unit. I've got a very good boom operator, Phil Sterling, and he's so enthusiastic that



Heaving the Rollerts and digging up stones.

when you want something he doesn't walk by him. I don't see the point of three people because you can always grab a grip or one of the electricians if you need help to move a cable. Crews are usually very good in that way. Someone will always pick up a cable and help drag it during a trucking shot and so on.

CP: Did you work well with the cameraman Vince Minton on this production?

PHILLIPS: Very well, very well. He was always trying to help.

CP: Did he sympathize with you on the personal dislike over when it is the key frame and what is a good distance for mike placement?

PHILLIPS: Well I've worked with Vince since the early days of *Newsweek*. There were no problems because he knows that I always want the mike as close to the frame line as I can.

CP: Vince told me that although a film may be shot in 185 it is printed in 16mm. This can cause problems if it is tracked up wrongly. So in the frame line the edge of the 185 frame arm is the edge of the unmarked 135?

PHILLIPS: Unfortunately we had to frame on the edge of the 135 to begin with. Things tended to change a bit after I had a discussion with Kenwood about it. It meant on a medium shot we were losing about 18 inches. Towards the end of the production we marked the matt box a bit and got in closer. From the start they had decided to shoot 185, but Richard was worried about television release. I had the same problem on *Apple* where they shot in Academy. Richard is extremely helpful though. If you have a problem you can go up and talk to him about it, and he will try and change it.

CP: If you have a problem on the set do you usually go to the production manager, who tries to sort it out between, say, the cameraman and sound man, or do you always go to the director?

PHILLIPS: Having known Vince in the past I was aware to him if the problem had something to do with

the lighting or framing. However I usually go through the first so as not to worry the director, he has got enough problems as it is.

CP: Would you prefer a director to take a more direct interest in technical problems and thus compensate as it goes along?

PHILLIPS: I don't have a great interest in production strategy, even to such day's shooting (which we didn't have on this production). Work out the problems before you hit the set. If the director had to face all the technical problems that come up, the director's role would have to suffer.

CP: Do you think Australian cameramen generally allow for sound men in their lighting set up?

PHILLIPS: No. I was very strong at that actually. Vince was very good with his lighting although in the Exhibition Buildings, because of the huge set, he had a lot of lighting problems. He put in it with 16 and so on, and we had a few problems with shadows. I remember one in particular where we had to have the mike, because it was a tracking shot, sit back from the actor. I would say the general attitude among cameramen is that one should only worry about sound in post-production. However his sync is just as much better than post-synchronous.

CP: Is it now I don't know whether it is ultimately the cameraman's responsibility, it appears to me to be the director's. He must make it clear to his crew the way he wants them to operate. If he wants his sync time everyone must help to get it. One way it supports the problem is being overcome overseas is through the use of radio mikes. Do you think that we have more conflicts than we should because we are a little behind in the technology?

PHILLIPS: I think they face, well at least used to face, the same problems in Australia. Charles Clark is his book on radio mikes, and one of his comments was that the cameraman must always allow for the non-die-

in his lighting. Television has got the basic technique where you have key from one side and fill from the other, and the boom always comes in on the fill side. In most of Rob Coppen's lighting set-ups I could get a boom in because he always used key, loved that light. But we did have our problems and there are a lot of shadows in that programme.

CP: You said Richard's a believer in the master shot. How does this influence your technique?

PHILLIPS: I suppose television tends to spoil the sound recording a bit. The master shot is usually not very wide and you can lay the sound recorded on the close-up over it. This is a great boon for the television recorder because he can get nice, close sound. In most cases you walk about, and even close-ups, tend to be wide.

CP: Suppose you are working on a system where you first shoot a master, then come in for the two shots and close-ups. Do you record sound separately on each of those takes, or do you put all the sound from one take over the others?

PHILLIPS: Usually the director gets the actors to wait the same again when they shoot the close-up.

CP: What I mean is that you might not record the dialogue in a wide shot because the distance is so great that you don't need perfect lip sync. You can then record your dialogue on a closer shot and run it back over the whole scene.

PHILLIPS: That's right. However always take a good track for the editor's sake. I always make a point of getting the continuity gap when close-up sound is to be laid over the whole master shot.

CP: If the film is going to be done by a certain master, does that mean you say the way you go about your job?

PHILLIPS: Not from a sound point of view. I always try to give the editor the best coverage I can, plenty of wild tracks and wild effects. Having done post-production work myself I know what problems can come up against me. I try to do my best to run them. I always deliver as clean a track as I can. A lot of sound records told me not to worry about the effects at all.

CP: I believe there was something like 700 or 800 separate effects on *the Dunes*, of which the majority had to be re-recorded because they couldn't get good ones out of the library.

PHILLIPS: Right. Most production houses haven't got the library of effects that are demanded by the films being shot in Australia, which are of a mainly colonial type. It is most important for sound records to obtain them on location. Quite often after shooting Phil and I would spend an hour and a half getting effects, and it proved invaluable. I always read a script through before the production starts and mark out what effects I think a scene will need — e.g. a buzz track of a crowded pub. If there are any problems I can discuss these before the production starts. A lot of directors and producers are prepared that way, they sort of take things to they come. ■



Viggo Green

PETER FENTON: MIXER

Peter Fenton works at United Sound Studios, a five-storey mixing and recording complex in the heart of Sydney.

In the dubbing theatre on the second floor Fenton spends anything up to 18 hours a day mixing the shorts and features which are beginning to flow into our cinemas. Over the past 12 months he has worked on Barrie's *ALVIN PURPLE AND PETERSEN*, Weir's *THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS*, Bourke's *INN OF THE DAMNED*, Harbutt's *STONE* and Thornhill's *BEFORE THE WARS* — as well as innumerable documentaries, shorts and commercials.

GP: Could you describe how you operate a mix, once a film is cut?
FENTON: Well, usually you see the film through once or twice. It mightn't be their final cut and there is only one track — all the original dialogue cut together — but you get some idea weeks before the mix what it's all about. You also get an idea of what the sound is like and what problems there are.

Often you will discuss what needs to be post-synched and what doesn't. Opinions differ a lot. Some guys favour the original sound for performance reasons, some prefer to use it because it saves studio time and editor's time, others will learn more to post-synch on questionable dialogue.

Usually at this time the music director also sees the film and has discussions, although I'm not terribly involved.

By the end of the second screening I have a fair idea of what the problems are and what the film is about. It's important to know the story — you can't discover things happening in real life that you didn't know about in real 2 — for example you may have a number of scenes where the background has to be identical.

You also have to know what the heights are and what the depths are: you can't come to your great climax in real 4, open up in loud as you can go, then suddenly discover on real 5

United Sound, modelled on the famous American Glen Glen Studios, offers Australian directors and producers fully equipped recording, mixing and post-synch facilities, with the added advantage of cutting rooms available for hire on the premises.

Peter Fenton has worked extensively in the Australian film industry (mixing for *Supreme*, *Natex* and *Artracore* before joining United) and has travelled extensively overseas for United Sound, studying the techniques of the sound studio.

In the following interview, conducted by Peter Bellie at the United studios, Peter Fenton talks about mixing feature films.

first you want to go over that.

Once the film has been run a book-up is made — usually for about a week. It took us, using two mixers on the desk, about 50 hours to mix *Alvin Purple* and something like 40 hours to mix *Petersen*. *The Cars That Ate Paris* took longer because it was more complex, and *Inn Of The Damned* being a long film took even longer. Generally they vary between 40 and 60 hours but they usually have to fit into about a week. But then the mixing part is the last bit of the production, everybody knows how far behind they are and want to get on with it. That's why you finish up working crazy hours.

The director arrives Monday

morning and sometimes he'll like to see the thing right through again, other times he may just want to kick off or not see.

We mix the picture onto a 35 mm track (picture-mix), dialogue (D) and effects (E) — which means that even though you are achieving your absolute cut, and everything is balanced properly, you still have them separate from each other. This is standard overseas and has become standard here, but only fairly recently.

There are a number of advantages of mixing with a three-track. One is that it gives you tremendous control because you can cut in and out of record on any one of those three



Editor Rod Taylor checks the bank of buttons during the mix of one of the tracks.

Viggo Green

“A mixer is probably closer to a musician than anything: you are playing the guy’s music, the music of the sound tracks. You are playing it, but you can play it a lot of different ways.”

tracks at any time. So if you do a sequence and you want to alter the music, you don’t have to touch the other two tracks. If you want to add back and equalize and line of dialogue which is a bit off-synch you can do it without affecting either the effects or music tracks. Then again if you want to boost an effect you can line the whole thing up, set the effect and level, cut into record six or eight frames beforehand and cut out as soon as it has gone. So it gives you fantastic control, and virtually a complete M and E track at the end.

Once a reel has been mixed you play it back and discuss it. If it’s right you go on to reel 2, if not you

go back and make alterations. This will have taken somewhere between four and six hours. Some of them take longer. One reel of *The Cars That Ate Paris* must have taken 10 or 20 hours. We mixed it taking the last part of a day, played it back and didn’t like it, so we went home, came back in the morning and put started again. That’s the reel where the cars wreck the town and there was so much happening. The tracks had been so well laid (by Sarah Bennett) that the differences you could achieve were almost endless.

(Having mixed a reel, played it back and approved if you go on until you have finished the 10 or 12 reels.

The picture is then marked with changeover cues and we run a continuous double leader and actually see the film right from the top.

You may want to alter something having heard the whole thing, but then it’s usually just a matter of taking a bit of output of all reel 2 or boosting the effects in a sequence on reel 3, and so on.

At this stage we have to get the three strips down to 17.5 mm. because the film cannot yet transfer direct from the three strips to optical sound as they can overruns. The last job to do it should get all the fragments.

GP: How many tracks would you

run on an average reel?

PENTON: It varies tremendously depending on the picture and the reel. It may be a reel with only three or four conversations and consequently only half a dozen tracks with the dialogue on two or three, music on one and effects on two. The music reel of the same picture may have 15 tracks because that’s where the cars wreck the town. It can vary tremendously, but if you could make an average, I’d say about 80 tracks a reel.

GP: Do you mix down the dialogue tracks before you mix them with the music and effects tracks?

PENTON: No, not if it can help it



The United States delivery theater. On the screen: Jane Fonda as a scene from Terry Southern's *Joe of the Damned*.

Reynolds Company

The whole idea of three-stripe mixing and the idea of having a lot of dailies is to avoid promising, because when you pre-cut dialogue or effects you are locked into the balance of that preview. That's bad, because when you come to the final mix you may want to alter an effect but not the others, or one line of dialogue but not the others.

GP: Do you prefer to mix a lot of tracks separately laid or a few tracks which are fairly densely laid?

FENTON: It depends a hell of a lot on how the quality of the dialogue is for a start. A lot of tracks separately laid can give you an overall control that densely laid tracks don't give you. But then if they are too sparsely laid you might end up pre-mixing something when it doesn't really warrant it. It's very much a matter of the dubbing editor having a good appreciation of what is wanted at the end. We don't make any demands on the dubbing editors because the guys doing the features are damn good. But they rely very in technique and if they bring in tracks that are harder

to mix, then they should then I might say, "Well, I think that might have been better like that..." but I don't believe in getting heavy.

It might be frustrating, but they see that it has taken longer than it should have so they'll shut it next time. I don't make any demands as there at all. The only thing we do is give them our dubbing charts because they are big and spacious and ask them to write with the big letters so I can see them in the dark.

GP: I noticed during the rest of Joe of the Damned that several alternates were often laid for a line of dialogue, the original layover or solid line as well as the post sync line.

FENTON: This can be very handy. In *Abbie Hoffman* we went back to some original rather than the post sync because Tim Burton liked the performance better. It's good to have it here, but I've seen it overused and if then only make the mix more difficult.

GP: You mix with the help of an assistant. How do you divide the job between you?

FENTON: Oversee they invariably have three mixers, and they have them absolutely dead set after music, dialogue and effects. There is a mixer for each section. We have been working with two, and I split the tracks depending how complicated it is. I usually give him the effects, I take the dialogue and we split the music depending on who is the better. Usually, like in *Peter Pan* and *Abbie*, I do the dialogue and music.

GP: What do you think of the rock and roll system of mixing?

FENTON: The rock and roll gives you tremendous control, you can do a few feet at a time if necessary. You would think therefore that it reflects the pressure on the mixer, but it doesn't because you put it down right more work in the time allowed. People expect far more of you. I mixed 26 episodes of *Knight Rider* without it and that was no harder than mixing features today. The rock and roll system has often produced technicians called mixes, because if your knowledge of the

equipment is good enough you can stop and start so many times that in the end you've got to end up with a reasonable mix.

I think the rock and roll facility should be used as a back-up, because I am sure that the longer the process you can mix to see the better the flow. It's better to go back at the end and do the bugs rather than stop every ten feet, so I still reference carefully.

GP: Once you have completed a mix do you check the optical track back in the studio theatre?

FENTON: Not always, and that's a fault. What I do though is to see the answer point at the theatre as soon as I can. In a theatre things often sound different and you want to know that the dialogue really sounds as it does in your own room. For example, some background effects that are deep usually things can virtually disappear in a crowded theatre. On the other hand high-pitched sounds might sound quite loud compared to what you thought they were going to



Headed over the mixing console during the mix of *The Godfather* are Peter Frenkel (left), Neil May (center), and Terry O'Keefe (right).

sound. So you really have to see the movie in a theatre — which we are only now doing, because for the first time we are making some pictures that we can go and see.

CP: At the same time if a standard or Academy frequency roll off curve is incorporated into the monitoring circuit you can roll to what you are likely to hear in a theatre.

FENTON: Some of the places where you can't see the Academy roll off. We can't employ it, but we use a theatre horn, an old RCA Voice of the Theatre — a huge black box, as big as half a double decker bus. That in itself will roll the tops and the extreme bottoms off, and give you that boost that a Theatre does have. I know that that is a set of figures which say that this is Academy roll off, but there is no way in the world that you can tell me all the theatres around some have got these same figures.

When I can I can look at the theatre where the show is going to open. We heard a lot of noise at the Forum before it opened, and out of Alvin's, the Mayfair.

CP: Perhaps there's an argument then for adopting a roll off curve which corresponds to the theatre the film will open in?

FENTON: Well I would like to see the picture in the theatre, that would be beautiful.

CP: I believe that at some studios in the States they do in fact mix in large theatres.

FENTON: Yes, some of them do. MGM mix in a theatre as big as some of the theatres in New York, but then a lot of them don't. As you're stuck in a situation where you don't mix in a theatre, when you have got to do it, go to know the sound in your own room — and if you're mixing there for 15 hours a day how you get to know the sound in that room and have a reference to a movie theatre. You really have to use your judgement, and

although it sounds difficult I don't believe it is, because the guys in the States don't I've watched them most. Tim Glen's theatre which is in the Paramount lot, and it's not a big movie theatre. But it sounds like a theatre, it's got the same theatre horn in it and what must be something like the Academy roll off curve.

CP: They have got the monitors trimmed so you're not listening to your hi-fi set. They can mix problems and the sound's right.

CP: There seems to be some disagreement amongst sound engineers regarding the equivalence of location sound. Some advocate equating an on location wide stereo prior to equalization during transfers. Others on the other hand seem to prefer it all to be left to them. What do you recommend?

FENTON: Guys with equalizers on location might not be but if they know how to use them they can be doing good things. A bit of mildness doesn't hurt because they are affecting the way only later on if I've got to squeeze I can effect type and so on. But I like to do everything myself — you get a track that is over-equalized with the mix splitting on you and you really are in trouble. Those doing the location are generally OK, but I see still an over-crank and although I know the recorder is giving 1800 a day I reckon his only specializations are a Nagra and a quad tape.

CP: With large amounts of location post sync dialogue being used in Australian productions at the moment a common problem seems to be echo-hollow sounding dialogue recorded in 'live' rooms. Can you do anything to correct this?

FENTON: Well yes. We've got Kenex noise reduction units, commonly called a pass system. The device will actually split the echo on the ends of the words. It reduces the sound between words, even between

syllables if you get the release time fast enough. You run extreme reduction of echo with it. In fact I have used the Kenex while adding echo in trying to match up post sync lines or add lines with other stuff.

CP: What sort of limits does it then impose on pre, mid and post sync dialogue in the future you have been working on lately?

FENTON: Well, as long as you can go back when shooting, you are going to have more original sound than anything else. But you are going to have post sync material, as well — some may because of the locations and others because they want to change the actor's voice. Then you have wild lines shot on the set that the editor mistakes as best he can to the tape and although they probably don't lose the accuracy of the post sync lines they are obviously much closer to the original sound.

So in all of the time there have been sections of such — and the dialogue mixer's job is to make them all sound the same.

CP: What problems do you have trying to match the three different sounds?

FENTON: One problem is with post sync sound. Some artists are much better at post sync than others, which is one reason why there is variance about the use of post sync sound. I like to use the original sound if possible.

CP: Given that the original sound is used most frequently, there must be times when you need to match it with post sync dialogue. How do you go about matching the two?

FENTON: First of all you really should post sync all the parts in the one room. Now that doesn't always happen and that's what you've got a problem. A problem I believe you should avoid. But confronted with that situation you have a bank of very efficient equalizers which you have got to try to use on the location

and post sync voices to give it as close a quality as you can to the other. Also, when you do the post sync it is very important to position the actor properly. We have a wall with a changeable surface, from very flat to very bright, so we can adjust either an exterior or interior sound.

When it comes to the mix you try to match the rooms in volume and equalization. Your dubbing office has got to help you here because you have exactly the right backgrounds.

CP: You've mixed a lot of films at United Sound recently. Do the requirements of the directors and editors toward the use of sound vary a lot?

FENTON: Yes they do. Sometimes very subtle differences which are not easy to put in words. All the directors are different, and if you were to mix the same scene for them you would do it a bit differently each time. None is right or wrong. Take *Shane* for example, it's a black picture and it has a really good rock music score, so you have got to be a little less subtle — you have got to be a little less subtle with it than with *Incident at Viterbo* with the motor bus. *Cats* was a very difficult movie, sort of spooky, all a bit surreal — you have got to go the other way. Now obviously the director knows this and so do you.

I mix for the director. I have my own idea which I stick to, but you mix with a director. You have got to know how it should be done in your own mind and you have to know how he wants it to be done. A mixer is probably closer to a musician than anything. You are playing the guy's music, the music of the sound tracks. You are playing it, but you can play it in a lot of different ways. ■

Peter Fenton is a producer of Cinema Papers, and is currently working on his album at the Media Centre, La Trobe University.



From the segment from THE ADVENTURES OF BOB showing Jackey Joly Way Nash. The film is unfortunately missing eight of nine

Eric Reade relates:-



Dan Murray who plays the hero in THE ADVENTURES OF DOT

THE ADVENTURES OF DOT

Throughout its checkered history of film making, Australia has been plagued with a number of one picture companies. Although a few productions were successful, the backers were hesitant to take a second gamble, as they were unwilling to wait a reasonable time for a profit from their investment. One example of this was *Silks and Saddles*, a very popular production by Commonwealth Pictures in 1921.

Other one picture companies that readily come to mind are *Australat Films' Rembrandts* (1921); *Pacific Screen Plays How McDougall Tapped the Score* (1924); *Dominion Films, The Birth of White Australia* (1928); *Community Films, The Adventures of Dot* (1932); and *Inneca Films, The Man They Could Not Hang* (1934).

Dot is one less who has led researchers a merry song and dance. The National Library's list of Australian feature films originally showed *The Adventures of Dot* as being a 1930 production. *The Film Weekly* Directory 1962-3 gave the same year, but added "filmed in Newcastle". Then an amended list from the National Library, identified more than clarified, by stating that it was merely a "short" made in 1927 by Campo Productions. Finally, the "Sydney Cinema Journal" (1946) reaffirmed the 1930 myth, but promptly demitted it with "no further information".

As stated in my "Australian Silent Films" — the claim by the National Library that *The Adventures of Dot* was a "short" made in 1927, was perfectly correct. After being director of photography for the Australian silent film *Far From The Tree Of His Native Land*, American Lee Ross made the Dot adven-

ture for T. J. Dorgan.

However, when researching for my book "The Talkies Era" I wished to establish once and for all, whether *The Adventures of Dot* had ever been a feature film. One night after exhausting every channel open to me, I chance to say to my wife in sheer exasperation "This b--- *Adventures of Dot* is driving me up the wall." To my surprise and delight she calmly replied "That was made in Colac." Chance remarks sometimes reap a golden harvest!

Immediately I contacted "The Colac Herald" (Victoria), and my request made front page news. The follow up story on June 17, 1968 carried the banner headline "STARRED IN 1932 FILM". Underneath was a photograph carrying the caption "This is 'Dot' — the star of the film *The Adventures of Dot*."

That was how the story began. A news item in "The Colac Herald" on November 2, 1932 advised that the Regent Theatre, Colac, was promoting an enterprise to make a series of photoplays in Colac. The first venture *The Adventures of Dot* would be made in Colac by Community Films. Nominations for the leading roles would close at the theatre before November 4. Then appeared an entry form headed "Who will be Dot?"

Twenty-four nominations were received. Miss Alma Taylor, the attractive daughter of the local police sergeant, won the coveted role. The male leads selected were Bert Patrick and George Gay (father of Aisha Gay an ex-member of the world famous Australian singing group "The Seekers"), and now a Member of Parliament.) For some unknown reasons, all three declined to

appear before the camera — and Wyn Nash, Dan Murray, and Kevin Moloney appeared in *The Adventures* with Major McFadden in a supporting role.

Wyn Nash (now Mrs Wally Scott of Cobden) recalls that the director, J. M. St Ledger acted as photographer, whilst his wife attended to the make up. Dan Murray, a well known Colac and Finney footballer, is the father of Kevin Murray, who won the Brownlow Medal for 1969.

As *Dot*, a school teacher, Wyn Nash was wooed by Murray and Moloney. Scenes were shot at the Nash's home in Howe Street, the Colac Railway Station, Colac War Memorial and Red Rock (the crater of an extinct volcano just outside the town which now possesses a lake whose depth has never been measured).

Dan Murray recalls the romantic fade out with a smile. A local florist transformed a rather bleak spot on Lake Colac's shoreline, east of Rottergarook Creek, into a paradise complete with waving palms. Even the grass featured blossoming daisies.

A piece of very interesting information was that *The Adventures of Dot* was a silver film — a far from optimistic view of the talking picture industry that Australia was trying to establish at the time.

When screened at the Regent Theatre, Colac, in 1932 — capital city theatres in the same year were showing such local affairs as *His Royal Highness* (George Wallace), *On Our Selection* (Bert Roffey), and *The Sentimental Blake* (Cecil Scott and Ray Fisher).

Eric Reade is a film historian and author of several books including *Australian Silent Films* and *The Talkies Era*.

Those Who Love 1926



Frances McDougall directing a scene in *Those Who Love*, the silent film production.



Billy Carter and Marie Lorraine (professional name of Frances McDougall) in a sentimental scene from *Those Who Love*.

THE McDONAGH SISTERS

Paulette, Phyllis and Noel were the daughters of wealthy Sydney media, Dr McDonagh, who was at one time honorary surgeon to the J. C. Williamson firm, and it was through their father's theatrical contacts and his social gatherings of theatrical personalities at their luxurious mansion 'Drummoyle House', that the young girls first became infatuated with show business.

In the mid-1930s they became mild cinema-goers, but in intermittent discussions after the show they thought they could do something equal to much that was then being imported to Australia. They decided to make society melodramas set in the city, which could be any city in the world, and which would thus have an international appeal as against the more narrow appeal of the successful but often crude outdoor films then flooding the local market. Their films, unlike those of Longford, Bennett or Beaumont Smith were not peppered with typically resolute actors as rough and ready outdoor life, but rather concerned the more genteel manners of the feminine refined city life. Also unlike the films of Longford et al, there was little about their films that was identifiably Australian (with the possible exception of *Two Minute Silence* (1933), which was really more British than Australian). They seemed to disagree with Charles Chauvel who at the 1927 Royal Commission said: 'The only way to give an Australian film international appeal is to make it truly Australian.'

Pauline apparently went to P. J. Ramster's film school in Sydney and studied motion picture production for six months. Ramster was rather a third-rate social director whose many films (with titles like *Should Girls Kiss Soldiers* (1916), *Should a Doctor Tell* (1923) and *Jessie's Friends Love Aish* (1921)) showing his insouciant interest in the lady no longer exist. Indeed, a talented actress, had appeared in Beaumont Smith's *Jee* in 1925. With nothing much more than luck and determination the girls decided to embark on what was becoming rapidly a men-only domain. They were assisted in their venture by three things. Their class background made it possible for them to make contacts in high society and government circles, their father assisted their first venture financially, and as women in this field they had 'novelty' value and were able to exploit their actual careers.

The story has often been told how Paulette wrote the scripts and directed (with the exception of their first film *Those Who Love* (1925)) for which, Ramster was employed to entail in the direction (see *Pat*, March 1974), while Phyllis looked after the art direction and general business, and Noel under her stage name of Marie Lorraine, acted the leading lady. They faced numerous problems common to all film makers in the 1920s, and some others caused by men putting them down. One example of this occurred when

they tried to get a distributor to take their film they were told patronizingly to go home, little girls. But there were also times when their cinema got them advantages denied others. For instance, Phyllis loves to tell the story of how they were given permission to use the NSW Governor's train for a section of their film, because she always insisted on seeing the 'train at the top' and the novelty of the girls' venture obviously appealed to the Governor, so much so that he did not mind waiting for the girls to finish with his train, even though they had gone over the agreed time. (Interview with Phyllis McDonagh, 1973 also *Sydney Mail* 6.8.38 p.22).

Now this is in such direct contrast to the attitude taken by the NSW Government and cinematograph generally to Australian (and film) makers ever since 1900 that it deserves some comment. Both Longford and Bennett had trouble when they wanted to show policemen in uniform in their films and both had trouble getting access to prisons, and were plagued by censorship requirements and general government red tape, so much so that Bennett wrote a scathing article for the film journal of the day entitled 'Please, Mr Policemen, May I Make A Movie?' I doubt very much whether any male film-maker would ever have got the NSW Governor's train let alone kept him waiting while they finished filming.

Their class background led to an easy informality of approach with high officials and may even have assisted them in getting their films shown at gala premises at the Prince Edward Theatre, with the Governor Sir Dudley de Chair in the audience. Certainly in 1930, Sir Benjamin Fuller, prominent theatrical entrepreneur, took their side against the unions. '... It is a downright shame that any dog-in-the-manger attitude of the Musicians Union should hamper the work of the McDonagh sisters. These brilliant girls, left fatherless, have made their own way, they have produced fine movie films, and they are helping to establish Australian films as an industry.' (*Daily Telegraph* 13.3.30). Their class background was also reflected on the screen in their preoccupations with the leisure rich and their greatest 'prop' was their own palatial family mansion, Drummoyle House. Finally, after the death of their father left them in the debt to the tune of 500 pounds on their first film. It was an unexpected legacy from a rich old uncle in Chile that helped them start their first film.

All this is not to belittle the women's considerable talents, as is obvious from the films themselves, but their achievement needs to be placed in the true perspective of the time and facts so that a correction can be given to the distorted view presented by poorly researched articles (see *POL*, Mar 1974 and *Luncheon* No. 30, Feb 1974). One thing is clear: Australian male film-makers have always had a tough time making films in Australia — women film-makers have always had a tougher time because of social oppression, but there were some advantages for some women. It is the vast number of would-be women film directors who never made it (part-

ly because they were not so well equipped as the McDonaghs) that one is really concerned about.

Ross Cooper

FILMOGRAPHY:

1925 THOSE WHO LOVE

d. Paulette McDonagh & P. J. Ramster, g.c. McCD production, g.c. Pauline McDonagh, ph. Jack Fletcher, a.c. Phyllis McDonagh, l.p. Isabel McDonagh — scenes staged near at Marie Lorraine (Lois Quaye), William G. Carter (Benny Mantel), Robert Pangle (Sir James Mantel), Mrs Kate Thorne (Lady Mantel), Charles Beetham (Austin Mann), George Dean (Parkier), Reginald Reeves (Sir Furness Reeves), Jackie Williamson (Peter), Howard Harris (Doctor), Sylvia Newland (Bebe Dorrel), Bill Wilson (Ace Blunder), Nellie Ferguson (Mabel), Herbert Walton (Bob), 5. stat. J. C. Williamson Films Ltd. screened: Syd. Mepmarket 11/12/26

1928 THE FAR PARADISE

d. Pauline McDonagh & P. J. Ramster (7) p.c. M.C.D. Productions ph. & continuity Paulette McDonagh ph. Jack Fletcher, a.c. Phyllis McDonagh, l.p. Noel McDonagh — Marie Lorraine (Cherry Carson), Paul Longuet (Peter Lawlor), John Faulkner (Howard Lawlor), Clifton Marwick (James Carson), Arthur McLaughlin (Karl Ross), Arthur Clarke (Lee Farrar), Harry Hestley (Beck), Lewiston (Admiral General), 1928 p.c. stat. Arthur Condon Films also Argyle Films Ltd. (7) screened: Syd. Region 14/7/26

1933 THE CHEATERS

d. Pauline McDonagh g.c. M.C.D. Productions g.c. Pauline McDonagh (from a story by Phyllis McDonagh), ph. Jack Fletcher, a.c. Phyllis McDonagh, d. Pauline McDonagh and Jack Fletcher Sound: Vocalion Studios, Melbourne. Laboratory work: Jack Fletcher, l.p. Arthur Greenway, Marie Lorraine (Isabel McDonagh), John Barnbach, Leif Deupler, Arthur Dargie, 8. stat. at Australian Film Studios, Warr. Sydney Released at Ben Ryker's Rexy Cinema, Pitt St., Sydney.

1932 TWO MINUTES SILENCE

d. Pauline McDonagh g.c. M.C.D. Productions g.c. Pauline McDonagh (from a play by Leslie Haydon), ph. (7) l.p. Leif Deupler, Arthur Greenway, Campbell Connell, Leonard Stephens, Ethel Gabriel, Leo Franklin, Frank Leighton, Frank Bradley, Hope Butler, Peggy Pryde, Arthur Greenway, 9. Syd. Prince Edward 16/1/32

Compiled by Ross Cooper
Acknowledgements — Eric Reade



William Friedkin

«I don't really think you can stop a story that is moving 100 miles an hour for some kind of character analysis — not in American cinema.»

FRIEDKIN: Generally I don't pay any attention to reviewers, good or bad. It is fun to get good reviews because they serve to be good publicity, but I have never read a review where I have learned anything about my work.

GP: Let's take Pauline Kael's review where I have learnt anything **FRIEDKIN:** No.

GP: Well let me give you a piece of advice: if she doesn't like the film, saying it has a great shock value but it is only of superficial value. It ranks you as a great Hollywood style director, superficial but stylish, and with a very inherent kind of approach. She finds no social significance to it in other words.

FRIEDKIN: I couldn't care less. I mean, frankly, there are a few people whose opinions I value that I know a lot. Here doesn't happen to be one of them.

GP: Whose do you value?

FRIEDKIN: Long after Pauline Kael's review, or anyone else's, finds its just and, which is to say the overwhelming of garbage, *The Exorcist* will be playing around the world and moving millions. There will be those who love it, those who hate it, there will be those who drive out of the theatre screaming, those who are moved to applaud at the end as happens at every showing everywhere in this country — which you don't see in the newspapers. You read stories about how people are

William Friedkin, together with Francis Ford Coppola and Peter Bogdanovich, is a member of the famous Director's Company which produced the highly successful *PAPER MOON*. Friedkin's latest films, *THE FRENCH CONNECTION* and *THE EXORCIST*, have also been extraordinarily successful: although not critically.

In the following interview conducted by David Bradas, William Friedkin discusses film critics, his views on the role of the director, and *THE EXORCIST*.

Friedkin's credits also include *GOOD TIMES*, *THE NIGHT THEY RAIDED MINSKY'S* and *BOYS IN THE BAND*.

fainting and screaming and vomiting but you don't read that after every performance there is applause in the theatre — a bit what you don't read is what I have experienced by going to MacDonald's hamburger joint across the street from the theatre and hearing students from UCLA sit around and discuss the film, discuss its merits, its defects. I don't respect Pauline Kael either as a reviewer or as a person. I read a review of Pauline Kael's on *Last Tango in Paris* and she was then praising the idea that *Last Tango in Paris* had some deep social significance in opposed to being just another beautifully photographed flick where a guy is screwing sex with a beautiful girl. That is all it was to me. I mean *Last Tango* had about as much to say as *Deep Throat* and I liked the movie very much but I take it for what it is, largely superficial entertainment.

Now if it also happens to be thought provoking to some people, so be it.

GP: What are some of your favourite movies then, now that we are here?

FRIEDKIN: *Chinatown*, *Pete of Gray*, *All About Eve*, 1961.

GP: All American films?

FRIEDKIN: No, *Beverly Hills Cop* — I don't finish it. *The Magnificent Seven*, *White Heat*, *L'Aventurier* was a great film, but again that is very personal. *Bullitt* is one of my favourite films. *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, but again that's very personal. I mean if some sociologist was going to take that list and go through it and try to explain something from it I think it would be as trouble. I just thought those were — again for very personal reasons — films that moved me. I have turned down the opportunity to review films for one of the leading magazines in this country, by leading

I mean in terms of circulation, because I don't think of it as a function that could serve any good. Most reviewers tend to use a film as a vehicle for their own schtick, for their own ideas, so that when a film comes out they think "This is going to be my light wacky review, or this is a picture in which I will try to show how some overrating track is revealed in a climax of a man holding a bird in his hand." The only film reviewer that I ever read with tremendous enjoyment and enjoyment was Agnes. First of all Agnes was a fine writer, and several I loved film as a medium, and I don't really think that Pauline Kael does. Pauline Kael is generally the kind of person that attacks a film maker or personal grounds. Pockinship told me that she reviewed one of his films and called him a fascist. Now he said: "I have never met this woman, I know nothing about her, she knows nothing about me, she saw a movie and wrote a review calling me a fascist." I don't think you can really have any respect for a person who calls himself a film reviewer and attacks a film maker or personal grounds.

GP: I don't know if that would be considered personal grounds though in the case of say Pockinship's film.

FRIEDKIN: Fascist is a very strong word to accuse somebody of. You know, I mean I could possibly be

one of two things, one is to be a fascist, or two this particular writing may have totally reviewed the man's misadventures. You know, I would give 90-95 either way.

CP: It seems to me that you are saying that a reviewer has no vital function.

FRIEDKIN: No, I am saying that you could create me all of your so-called leading reviewers, of which Kad I imagine would be one, and I would say that they serve no useful purpose whatever. I challenge how much they really know about the art of, or the difficulty of, making a film. From any standpoint — from the standpoint of actor, director, set designer, photographer, film crew, wardrobe mistress, whoever I don't know any of the so-called leading reviewers, except Shackle perhaps, who has over tried to go through the experience as any level. Now I imagine it happens to be a fellow who I admire and respect. I imagine it is a reviewer. He is a very fine film critic. I think that if you are qualified to review films in *Broadcast* and yet I find myself generally in total disagreement with the means by which he reviews a film.

CP: Let us briefly try and investigate this just for a moment and see what the frame of reference is that you are speaking from. I take it to be appropriate to film in a very personal context.

FRIEDKIN: Oh, absolutely.

CP: What is it about a film that for you makes it an extraordinary film?

FRIEDKIN: There are no hard and fast rules. I have given you far too many of the films that have amazed with me the longest. It is like what makes a great meal you know. It is just the perfect enjoyment of what you eat at the moment or is it the state of mind you brought to it at the time? It is all so personal, and a film is like a meal, it's here it, it might be fed for your mind or food for your eyes but it is like a meal in that regard.

CP: Some film makers I know have a very particular, almost reflexive understanding of what are the components for those of a great film. I have heard interviews with Truffaut and he has a very precise understanding, a very personal one sometimes, of what makes a great film. **FRIEDKIN:** God bless him. I don't I just go to the movies. I am not interested in what is the great film. To me the best film I have seen in the last 12 months is *Magnus Force*. The best director, the most entertaining. Now I don't enjoy films as a very visceral gut level myself, it is not movies me or it doesn't. I mean the reviewer that comes out with a favorable review for every Russian film or every Godard film. I have seen that stuff and so me most of it doesn't get through. As I have said before I don't like it. I haven't liked any single Godard film for the last, I don't know, eight to 10 years.

I didn't care for *Day for Night*, it wasn't my cup of tea, although I don't deny the importance or the brilliance of the cast who made it, but when I pay my \$3 I am not interested in consensus or reputation or brilliance, it is what is up on the screen and it either goes to me or it doesn't, and in many ways it doesn't. I admire Hitchcock's work tremendously but I haven't liked a Hitchcock film since *Psycho*.

CP: After seeing *The Exorcist* three times I keep feeling that there was an awful lot of Hitchcock in it, in the sense that you were constantly snipping things out for the audience, pointing exactly at what you wanted them to see and how you wanted them to see it. There is an awful lot of control in Hitchcock films, almost total control, where he knows what the audience is going to think, when it is going to do it and how. It is like he is playing with the audience. I felt the same thing about *The Exorcist*. You would build up tension and then all of a sudden you would be everybody laughing, yelling at the screen, making fun of the theater, and also scolding.

CP: How then would you define your intention in making *The Exorcist*?

FRIEDKIN: To tell a marvelous story, that was my only intent. I am not interested in the occult or the supernatural. I would say 95% of it is a highly realistic story. 95% of what I have read in it is usually practiced by highly articulate, highly intelligent good folks. If I suddenly saw Dr. Carl McGinnis practicing the occult I would be a lot more interested in a than Anton Levey doing it. What attracted me to *The Exorcist* was its incredible story value. There are very few films that I have enjoyed that just wonder around wondering to a character study. I greatly admire the work of Scott Fitzgerald whose first most important principle was "ask a character".

CP: How did you meet Peter Blatty? Did he come to you with the property or did you seek him out?

FRIEDKIN: I met Blatty about six years ago in Blake Edwards' office. Blake Edwards had asked me to direct a feature film of Peter Gans and I had just finished directing the *Sammy and Cherie Moore Good Times* which was my first film. Blake Edwards heard that I was a very well known film director and I told him that I was, and I was flattered at his invitation. He said "Here's the script", which he had prepared. I hated it. I was really drinking what I was going to say to Blake the next day because I wanted to direct the thing in it with a good opportunity for me. Anyway I decided I couldn't be less than honest and I told Blake that I was the worst piece of shit he had ever read in my life and that it was really playing false to his audience and the character he had established on TV. Blake didn't say anything for a while and then he pushed a button on his desk and said "I would like you to tell that to the man who wrote the script. He is sitting in the other office. That's all I can do for you."

I was very embarrassed, and I repeated what I had to say to Blatty and Blake was still listening. Blatty

making references to certain scenes. It is as if some one certain things that people are now coming to him and expecting to see and the response is even greater, which is what I find amazing. After they knew what it is that they are supposed to be afraid of, when it does come up unexpectedly they just go wild.

FRIEDKIN: Well you see, like 200 people can sit out to make a movie like Hitchcock and take advantage of that expectancy but the trick is to fulfill the audience's desire. One you have taken them on this trip.

CP: Do you think you have done that in *The Exorcist*?

FRIEDKIN: Well so far it would appear that we have. I mean the response in the 242 city theaters where it is being shown is extraordinary. What is happening in Woodstock is the same in Atlanta, Georgia, where they average two admissions a day.

CP: Two admissions a day.

FRIEDKIN: All over the country where it is playing people are screaming, yelling at the screen, making fun of the theater, and also scolding.

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broke out in spontaneous laughter and he said "You know you are absolutely right and you are the only one who has had the guts to say it — it's terrible." Well I didn't get the job and Blake directed it himself. I did over the years become friendly with Blatty, not casually, but we used to see each other from time to time. Then he moved out and I read it while I was doing post-production work on the French Connection, and I was really struck by it like the most people who read it, I was shocked. I spoke to him and said I'd be interested in directing the film and he said "Marcello!"

CP: Did you intensify yourself in the movie?

FRIEDKIN: Not in the usual, no. I immersed myself in research of the more recent cases of possession that had occurred in this country and in the actual case upon which Blatty's book is based. This took place in 1949 in Georgetown DC, and involved a 14 year old boy, not a 12 year old girl. I read the case and I spoke to the priest who was involved at the time, and a number of people who were involved in the exorcism which took place, not in a private house or in a church, but in Allentown Brothers Hospital in St. Louis.

CP: How long did that exorcism take?

FRIEDKIN: Three and a half months. It was witnessed by a number of people and all of the participants that Blatty raises in the book and in the film are the actual participants of possession. I have a cassette recording from that case given to me by the Grand Provincial of New York who got it from the Vatican. It is a recording of a recent exorcism at the same place. I have the seven tapes of the film right from the cassette. The voice of a teenage boy who was said to be possessed.

CP: What about the ritual about you used?

FRIEDKIN: Well there were some things that were in the novel but were in the script. I had to put into the film. The chair moving to chase the devil and the disease, moving toward Christy McDonald is in the actual case and is on the tape I made with the boy's voice. When we told that over the phone I felt off the chair. She told it in a matter of fact, calm, no dramatic time. The sound is so perfect to any kind of imagination. She didn't say anything. Catholicism after it was over, she just was there when it happened, doesn't know what it meant, doesn't know why it happened, all she knows is that her nephew had been saved after 3 1/2 months of exorcism. Today he is living a normal life.

CP: What were your feelings like?

FRIEDKIN: He is now here to get his C.I. I was here, but I just thought it would be better not to contact him because I have been told by his relatives and by the priests who have involved that he seems to have no recollection of what happened to him. He has since been married and had three children so why go back to that time in his life? I was feeling a little called "The Exorcist" and "Exorcism" were pronounced.

CP: What were your feelings during

these investigations?

FRIEDKIN: They just opened up to me the infinite possibilities of what goes on in this world but are not encompassed in my own philosophy. Every film that I make, or try to make, is both an adventure and a learning process. Each time out I learn a hell of a lot about a lot of things. I don't necessarily draw any conclusions but I am exposed to these things on a dramatic level. In this case I was exposed to the phenomena of possession and exorcism as it exists and is practiced in this country, and in other places today. I spoke to an Indian priest who is an exorcist in India. I read about a case that took place last year in West Germany. For example in San Francisco last July there was a three-month exorcism performed by a Jesuit. You reach a conclusion after a while that if it wasn't possession it was a disease for which there is no name and no medical cure. Nothing internal or external was able to cope with it till a priest came in and performed an exorcism.

CP: So you are not prepared to take it any further than that?

FRIEDKIN: Well, you can't take it any further than the facts, other than on faith, and when you start to take it on faith then you reach a conclusion that there is a God and there is a Devil.

CP: Which you don't believe?

FRIEDKIN: I believe that the power of God and the evil are unknowable which I would imagine is probably the classic agnostic position, but it allows for the existence of God and the Devil and I would be a damn fool if I didn't. I mean you just can't get up in the morning and look around you and not think of a higher order. Now you can call it whatever you want, call it Poppycock, call it Gorbuchus or Beldick. If asked to fit me well and asked "Come on, yes or no," I have to say "Yes I believe in God."

CP: Did you feel that there was some kind of intervention in you making the film?

FRIEDKIN: Well I think that there was. I very much believe that fate takes a hand. I don't think it goes as far as there being a master log up in heaven where a guy fills in the names and dates and all the chips then fall into place, but there very well may be. The greatest minds that have ever lived never produced don't know the mystery of faith. We have the answers to a lot of questions and interesting speculation to a lot of other questions, but we don't have the answer to that one big middle "What does it all mean?" Nobody knows that. So you accept most of what goes on in your life as faith and even if you have no faith you take for granted that you are still going to have a job tomorrow, that you will still be breathing, your heart will still be beating and you will still love someone and be loved. Now that is pretty far out stuff which we all take for granted.

CP: Did you find that a lot of things happened on the set? I understand the girl who played Regan isn't going to act any more.



Director William Friedkin and actress Ellen Barkin confer on the set of *THE EXORCIST*.



Angie Biese (Lance Parker) serves drinks at the lobby bar of the Regency Hotel in New York City. (Gene Hackman) in Friedkin's *THE FRENCH CONNECTION*

ZARDOZ

Beneath the glossy icing of John Boorman's *Zardoz* lies some substantial philosophical architecture. The surface of the film is factually before its philosophical stage. But this is no cause for complaint. If ideas, philosophical ideas, need to be made glossy in order to reach the vulgar masses — or at least to escape from the television screen — then we should acquiesce in the glossiness graciously. Actually it is not the glossiness or slickness of the visual style that is discouraging; it's the fact that Boorman has confined himself to pure slick in the presentation of his ideas, the film would have been a monument. It is the touch of artifice, elegance, which distracts, and which gives the impression of a kind of self-indulgence on the part of the director of which he is not in fact, at the intellectual level at any rate, guilty.

The time is the year 2593. Human society is disrupted and regressed, as evidenced by the ruins of antique 20th century cities and machines. Implicit rumors of certain historical tyrannies reach us. Technology is reinvented, and the alternative is not a macrobiotic communal culture, but a distorted barbarism.

These devastated people worship a god named Zardoz, who periodically makes astounding discursive statements in the guise of a monumental stone head. If the special effects at this point fail in harmony, the director nevertheless has the last laugh. For we know later that the stone head and the idea of the god Zardoz itself is just somebody's cynical political ploy, perpetrated as a means of controlling the Brakals, as these regressed and neglected humans are called.

Zardoz has faithfully appointed a kind of territorial representation, which sacred violence is to accommodate the Brakals, or at least lots of them. The severity of this occupation is unquestioned by the Brakals, who have presumably known, or retain a full-memory of, the horror of overpopulation.

Lacking technological means of transport, the Extraterrestrials perform their missions on handback, which makes them rather vulnerable, though the Brakals don't seem to notice. More mysterious is the fact that while the Brakals still have the means to dress themselves in suits and skirts, the Extraterrestrials are clad in Tiran-style leather Gutterings. Mounted on their gray chargers, they invoke the name of Zardoz with religious lust as they move down the Brakals whom they have bonded into the braches.

Zardoz, needless to say, is not a persuasive god. "The pen is evil, the gun is good," he instructs his ministers, but, as we later learn, this denouncement of sex is entirely pragmatic in intent — a simplistic (not to say a pedantic) approach to the problem of population control.

One of the Extraterrestrials, a burrheaded specimen named Zed, becomes apostate when he discovers the office of Zardoz, and tangles with the sprawling statue Lady Brakal in the midst of the sprawling statue Lady Brakal in the midst of the sprawling statue Lady Brakal. Later his journey is confirmed when he discovers a double. Why a book is called *The Wizard of Oz*. At this point we can sympathize with his disappointment — it is perhaps the impressive over-promise in the entire script. In his disenchantment Zed plots to smother himself inside the stone pedestal during one of its eruptions. He succeeds, and discovers a man therein. This man is the architect of the Zardoz



The Brakals are rounded up by one of the Extraterrestrials and consumed, part of Zardoz's perverted approach to people in control.

civil, and of much else besides, including Zed's own destiny. Zed accommodates him.

The pedestal — which is of course really just a sculptured arkway — returns to a land called the Veritas. The Veritas is a paradisaical domain insulated from the rest of the world — the Outlands — by a force field, and inhabited by a grotesque — rather loathsome-looking — people called the Eternals. These people are the fiercest of the fiercest, and the powerful of the former world, who endure before and succumb from the catastrophes of their era like this place, with the intention of preserving all that was of value in civilization — science, art, music, literature, flowers, etc. — and creating an aesthetically and politically perfect society, a society in which a rustic lifestyle is sustained by a sophisticated but unobtrusive technology. The founding fathers of the Veritas were a group of brilliant speakers who had perfected a technique for assuming indefinitely the biological processes of aging, so that all those advanced into the Veritas retained immortality. The technique for averting aging has its converse however: the premature (in words) in the Veritas is created not in ways of instant aging. The irreducibly wayward inhabitants are condemned to eternal infancy.

The Eternals examine Zed as fascinated contempt. His usual potency is a focus of interest, for changes there scarcely ever long since died out. This is the first symptom that leads us to suspect that all is not well in paradise. The apple indeed has a worm in it. Zed never discovers that a grotesque malady is slowly poisoning the Veritas; a kind of psychic entropy is in process, and its

final effect is to induce an individual to a state of total catatonia.

It is Zed's avowed mission to avenge the neglected humanity of the Outlands, but he soon amends that it is also his destiny both to redress the offense to Nature which the Veritas embodies, and to bring the gift of death to the Eternals themselves, and so release them from their sleepless nightmare.

This is the philosophical core of the film, involving ideas which have rarely if ever been portrayed on the screen, and which turn one or two successful cinematic riches on their heads. For one can view *Zardoz* as an inspiring essay on immortality and the closely related theme of Utopia. The central idea is that in order for life to have value for the one who lives it, the prospect of violence and conflict, suffering and death, is required. A perfectly harmonious society of perfect equals is of course a no-conflict society, a no-conflict society is, according to Boorman, also a no sex society, and ultimately a society in which innovation per se is altogether extinguished. Since death is just the final negative force — life means death, and is therefore in conflict with death — the concept of a no-conflict society will involve, as a logical conclusion, a society from which even death has been eliminated. This is the relationship between the themes of immortality and Utopia: the utopian aims, the aims to arrive at a state of perfect harmony, is part of the more potent urge to minimize conflict, to minimize the range of disturbance (which is our lot), and so to achieve equilibrium. The inevitable extrapolation of this program is the elimination of death itself.

Boorman's argument against the ideal of ab-



ulate Utopia is a powerful one. Tension, conflict, competition certainly deplete us — let they also stimulate and purify us. The full realization of equality — genetic as well as economic, or equality of opportunity — would entail the elimination of competition, since in those circumstances competition would become redundant. But competition is the dynamic of organization, of development, of evolution. Eliminate it, and evolution is arrested.

As a matter of fact we don't even need to refer to the disastrous psychological consequences of a conflict-free society in order to discredit it as a political or ethical ideal. For in such a society, a society purged of competition, equality cannot even be defined, much less demonstrated and enjoyed. There is then a conceptual difficulty here, as well as a merely practical one, for neither is one year for a non-competitive society as natural by its efficient measures on equality it is self-defeating, nor is it possible in a non-competitive society that equality would mean altogether, being non-recognizable and non-definable. From our point of view, here and now, such a society would indeed appear egalitarian, but it could not appear as such, as it would as such, by its own consequences, its own abstractions. And unless people know they are living as Utopia, can they really be said to be living in Utopia?

And only then the Vortex embody a political Utopia — it embodies a heliolic ideal as well. According to Boonman however, the heliolic is as more successful than the political ideal. For in order to be able to perceive some experiences as pleasure, we need to be able to contrast them with experiences of pain. A diet of unvarnished "pleasures" is thus out of the recipe for hedonism as all — for if pleasures are not recognized as pleasures, then they aren't pleasures at the first place. Just as equality can only be recognized, and hence appreciated, relative to inequality, so pleasure can only be recognized, and hence valued, relative to pain, or at least non-pleasure.

Nor can the Eternal take refuge in intellectual pleasure. With clarity at their disposal, one would think that in a position to expose in the fullest extensiveness of disconcerting the art master of the world through science. But the Elitists find that they have advanced instinctively to a certain point they can proceed as further, they just do not have the requisite neurological equipment. Hence they recognize that the "secret" of the final nature of the world is forever beyond their grasp, and with this recognition the heart goes out of their research. This is the most speculative of Boonman's arguments, I think.

With neither the continuous opportunity for neurological repairs and renovations, there is no a priori reason to suppose that knowledge cannot continue to evolve indefinitely. For the laws of evolution which apply to knowledge may be different in kind to the laws which regulate the evolution of biological systems. That is, even though consciousness, and hence knowledge, is grounded in a biological system, it may be a "supermer" phenomenon, and in such a case to new and vastness laws, laws not reducible to them, with a supposition need as to may involve vitamins, or any other biologically anomalous, it merely involves the recognition that as new kinds of phenomena emerge from the older orders — as life emerges from inanimate matter, and consciousness from life — we can expect new kinds of laws, new principles of organization, qualitatively but not quantitatively predictable from the old laws. This means that even the biological or neurophysiological system in question has reached a certain stage of development, the evolution of knowledge now proceed in effect indefinitely, regulated by its own internal laws, as opposedness not produced by the fact that the biological system in which it is grounded is itself declining and self-destroying. Boonman strengthens his argument by invoking the premise that the Elitists are in fact superficially right, and that the physiological danger involved by accidents



Inside the Vortex, the Boonman gather for the symbolic breaking of bread

and accidents is not entirely reasonable. This is in fact a physically very plausible premise, and the psychological deterioration which would be entailed by this biological deterioration would be enough to account for the statements which the Elitists have reached in their stance.

The Vortex itself is certainly embodied in the Vortex converge and alone supports affirmation in the ideal of immortality. And it is in this context that the film makes its most enjoyable point, in proposing that death, being the final negation of all the values attaching to life, is for that very reason the condition for the affirmation of those values in the first place. For as we have already noted in relation to equality and pleasure, only experience which can be negated can be valued. Hence in order for us to value life itself it must be possible for life to be negated. And since it is necessary that we should value life — survival — before we can attach value to particular aspects of life, such as pleasure, or virtue, death becomes the condition for the validity of any value system whatsoever.

In a word, the theme of the film is that the essence of a value, say value, is that it can be negated, and hence that the condition for value attaching to life is that life can be negated. We preserve life precisely because it is so brief, vulnerable and precarious. Impose on it an unlimited supply of it — a supply which we must consume — and our attitude towards it would change out of all recognition. Death is therefore something to be celebrated, not regretted as so fearfully deplored.

Of course we shall always want a little more life than we actually get — maybe ten years more, even fifty years perhaps. But fifty years is not even why in other words, our desire for more life is a highly relative desire — we desire only a little more than our natural human span. It is not a desire to avoid death altogether. It is rather just that since we are usually in a position to conceive of years or decades whose fulfillment would be beyond the hour of our death, we would always like to postpone that hour. It is that unholy potency per se that we regret, not even mortality within the appropriate confines of the typical human span. On the contrary, our minds are designed for that point, to extend it two greatly would place intolerable strains on our nature. The fact that we normally wish to postpone death is just an indication of how well designed that nature is, death is so good that our life runs its meaningful or precious to us right to the last minute, precisely because this life remains unfulfilled. That is, we regret death because it forces us to leave our lives unfulfilled, but to leave our lives unfulfilled is to love them and value them to the last minute, and

hence to avoid an inconceivable and intolerant deterioration.

The definition of mortality — and implicitly of all the negative aspects of suffering, all the modes of suffering and evil — and their inclusion in our system of values, is a decidedly unconscious moral attitude, for a Westerner of any rank. To stand in defiance of competitors and of some degree of violence and injustice on moral grounds is a seemingly noble — but certainly not cynical — posture. Indeed, yes. But it is precisely this attitude that Utopia violates. Because, that moral perfection negates the conditions for the exercise of morality, and hence is in a sense itself, and that absolute peace and harmony entail absolute apathy, and are hence the same whereby left is dismissed into flesh and blood. No, of course not. The source of our knowledge that perfection is a false ideal — not just in the sense that it is unattainable in its position but in that it is a self-defeating ideal — lies in the fact that on the way to constructing a viable and unattainable morality, whose objective is to consume evil, rather than to shun it altogether.

The cinema has long been exploring our confusion and ambivalence with respect to violence, suffering and death. Traditionally it recognizes that violence like to have a good cry when they go to the movies, even recently it has acknowledged that violence like to have a good cry at people being pushed, disarmed, crushed, groined, etc. as well that this acknowledgment is not only. The violence is not supposed to admit to itself that it evokes the vicious sadism, because to do so would be to confess cowardice. Hence the cinema conspires with its violence, and maintains a facade of hypocritical shock or disapproval at the horror which it itself is portraying, and pretending for its audience's enjoyment. That is, most violent movies attempt to provide some justification for their depiction of violence — they claim to be *conscientious* on the phenomenon in some respect, and thereby contributing to a moral awareness. Few movies dare to be cowardly neither, cowardly "humanity".

Zarboe comes closer, it characterizes the need for hypocrisy by affirming a rationale for our terrorism, if not enjoyment, of "evil". In a speech and entry reversal of the ubiquitous, archetypal, humanoid and vicious Puckish-type scene, Zarboe enters in a jocular manner, a naked figure to violent death, and finally a tedious celebration of mortality, a tedious as tedious, abrupt and understated in life itself. ■ **Fiona Matthews**

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DO DON'T LOOK NOW

John Tinsnes

Somebody once said that men distinguish themselves from the rest of the animal kingdom by his intense desire to take medicine, an observation that is pretty much to the point as far as it goes and which, incident, goes a little further than it ought to at first be thought: since it leaves quite aside the essentially rational nature of certain aspects of our behavior. And so, to extend the idea by a single degree, men is distinguishable from the animals about him by his desire, and his ability, to believe in magic. And magic is what Nicholas Ray's *Don't Look Now* is all about.

Not, fortunately, that we are to be treated to some kind of repeat performance of *The Exorcist*, with its concomitant, its dramatic righteousness, its utter inability even to begin to grasp the magical core of so much of our thinking and our behavior. For although there are certain superficial similarities — a child at the heart of the plot, the gradual emergence of a situation on neither side nor religious powers are engaged to deal with — the film is everything that *The Exorcist* is not. Which is to say that it is subtle, thought-provoking, deeply disturbing, possessed of a true artistic unity, unlike the Freudian-Buddhist delirium, it leaves the approval of a controlled and genuinely creative intelligence.

We begin in England: a soft sleep afternoon in the country, a little girl's play in a wood and pond, while her parents relax calmly. Childhood sounds and movements, random, ordinary, yet somehow charged with menace. The little girl's step against the misted landscape. Her brother's bicycle peering over a discarded pane of glass, a doll breaking sound without reverberation. The girl's rubber ball spinning slowly in water. Inside the house the father comes abruptly to his feet, runs to the door and on out to the pond in which, as some hidden instant has told him, his daughter has just drowned.

Some time later Venice, autumn, the father supervising the restoration of a church, the mother just beginning to emerge from the psychological coma precipitated by the little girl's death. In a restaurant the couple become aware that they are the focus of attention of two aging Englishwomen. A strange tone arises in the restaurant washroom — both the washroom and the scene nearly surveyed by a stunted, ghoul-like, irreducible female attendant — in which one of these women is made known to the mother in head and profile. Unperceived, the reveal that she has seen the dead child in her red coat sitting happily between the couple at their table. The father, too, is psychic, says the blind woman only that was he devised to die pond as his daughter drowned, but he, the step, unwilling, perhaps afraid, to acknowledge his gift and its implications. Convinced of the woman's powers the wife returns to her husband with the story. He will

have some of it all that can come of this kind of thing, he says, is a further warning of his wife's psychological equilibrium.

Paradoxically, however, their roles begin to undergo a perceptible reversal: the wife, Laura, haunted by the revelation she feels she has been granted, emerges, very positively, from her catatonic, while John, the husband, becomes progressively more disturbed both by the two odd English sisters, whose path now so frequently crosses his own, and by the diurnal presence, half-glimpsed on a number of occasions in the murky Venetian alleyways, of what appears to be a child in a red coat. It is at this point that the film really begins to take hold at the viewer: we know that the little girl is dead, and yet, along with the irrational John, we are becoming aware. Death's fall step seems to have been removed and a certain fundamental anxiety rooted in those parts of the subconscious that are the most primitive and the most susceptible to magical stimuli begins to make itself felt. The further the plot develops, the more self-defined, it is sufficient to say that as John's predicament deepens to take over scenes of truly dark forces at work, it seems, indeed, that only by some marks of magic can John be rescued from the unspeakable fate — be it physical or psychological — that is drawing him so fearfully to itself.

There is no message in any of this, certainly not in any of the usual cinematic means at least. As reinforcement: *Don't Look Now* is totally genre-free, but there is a profoundly unsettling undercurrent here, indicating in the viewer's mind more than the standard shock — or, better, terror. Here, it means, he is confronted by a situation which is plausible and yet which is or is simply not available to normal modes of resolution. This emphasis on the power of the irrational is at no time frivolous or gratuitous: what happens to John together with the fading of pluckiness in him of the powerlessness of his assumed humanity is the first of this danger, answering and sharp reflex force, is a high-level expression of physical and mental uneasiness with which we are all acquainted and which relate ultimately to our basic anxiety about the nature of existence and the part we play in directing our own lives. A film so disturbing on the cinematographic level is obliged to point so convincingly moral.

Nicholas Ray's direction is virtually flawless throughout: mood, atmosphere, dialogue, action, all are handled with an intuitive skill hampered by no illusions about the rigorousness and sheer labor any work of art demands. The pacing is superb, the action as beautifully handled, the crucial flicking of nothing yet threatening ambiguity — of a solution just around the corner if

only one could reach, if only one dared reach, that corner — is not lost for a second. There are many memorable moments: the washroom scene already alluded to, the oddly chilling interview between John and the expressive Italian chef of distress, the astonishing portrait through a crumbling Venetian city somehow on the verge of leaving here a new reality that is an absolute, but atmospheric, unreal, and a scene of physical love that is very beautiful in itself and which, though brilliant, interesting, reveals more effectively than any standard domestic portrayal the strength of the bond between John and Laura.

Anthony Rackman's camerawork is of the highest order and the two Rackmans are the finest advantage given it, as in *Walkabout*, there is no excessive, needless far-west effects that erupt from the obvious and repetitive through the merely invisible to the all but imperceptible, the scene is realized so fearlessly simply because what is what he says is so extremely telling. The way in which Venice is established as, much more than a city of great and ancient beauty and, in a sense, a single dazzling action shot through with psychic violence is an object lesson in the creation of an ambience focused in ambiguity and contradiction. Ray's secret is his sense of his artistic goals and of how to attain them, perhaps the most striking single example being his impressively controlled use of red as a leitmotif in Venice, all greys and browns and dingy shades of yellow and white, this chosen colour, grey, white, black, becoming, appears rarely and only in the briefest of flashes, inevitable yet undeniably ominous: the symbol both of what John has lost and of what is drawing him, wife, wife, into the danger of the magical unknown. In no competent hands this could have been just an arty and pretentious device here it is simply further evidence of the director's mastery.

Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie as John and Laura both do extremely well, although Julie will refer too much to that actually broadly middle-class manner and those consciousness (perhaps the media shape our behavior in well on our side). Donald Sutherland's performance is the backbone of the film in acting terms and he brings to it the same aggressive but very real strength he exhibited, both as actor and as character, in *Kluge*. It's a pleasure to watch someone so capable, so assured, so free of mannerism. Lower parts have been cast with the same intelligent care and attention to detail that characterizes the scripting (from a story by Daphne du Maurier), the direction and the camerawork. All in all a most satisfying film.

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This is one of those films which gives the viewer a feeling of unreliability — it is difficult to emerge that it would be possible to make a statement about the film that anyone without some kind of vested interest would ever bother disagreeing with. It is one of those films that begs for the witty superficiality of a Bob Fosse or a John Travençolo.

Number 56 is a bad film by every criteria, except the criterion of its ability to make money, which it will do whatever the audience level it goes off from is viewed. This is not to knock the serial itself, which often achieves a respectable standard of writing and script editing for a local programme. Basically the film suffers from the same fault as *Cowboy Town* (see Bellbird). That is, the large cast of characters, which for some reason are all included in the film, preclude the possibility of structuring a satisfactory plot line. *Cowboy Town* made the dual error of constantly explaining the absence of rapists from the serial, while using other key characters to no purpose at all. **Number 56** introduces a variety of unimprinted sub-plots to occupy all the seasons of that famous building: a solution that disorganises the dramatic structure of the soap, and leaves the film without even a sliver of coherence on which to hang its ill-fitted humor.

No purpose is served recasting the plot of **Number 56**. It is a lot more obviously tongue-in-cheek than the serial — Vera Collins marries the Prime Minister — and the barroom is a lot less successful. Let's leave *venere*, and *Black* and *Deena*'s central mix-up, requires for their laughs the seriousness of the situations beyond the jokes of the characters to contain them.

Number 56 is the first commercial feature I have ever encountered of which a reviewer could legitimately say, if he is forced, that it is out of focus. The blow up to 35mm from 16mm for theatrical presentation emphasises the inadequacies of local laboratory facilities. The whole "look" of the film is appalling — garish, claustrophobic sets, the flat lighting and the poor colour quality actually make it physically difficult to watch. The acting is substandard in any meaningful way and remains inflected at the same general shrillness as that of the serial — which is OK for television but excruciating on the large screen.

It has allowed Australia to see its 56-year-olds in colour before the arrival of colour television. That is the extent of its achievement.

Ron Quinn



Burns (Pit) McInnis and Flo (Bunny Worked) Clark Hamon's new movie (right) **Number 56**.

Stone



The Green Daggers and the Black Hawks gang fight in the Park and City

The most important thing about *Stone* is that it has been directed. There is a sense of purpose, a feeling of control, even a point of view evident in the film that is absent in other local features of the last decade. Only *Delancey*, which pretended to transcend directorial design, is an exception; at least amongst films that have achieved commercial release. This is not to ascribe any other distinction for *Stone*; it is merely to note that unlike *Alice Purple*, *Armigers of the Black Hawk* and so on look to Nickel Queen and *Demonslayer* (it is at least coherent as a movie). That is, whether we know it or not, it is at least standing on its feet to begin with.

Stone is a black film with pretensions. It drags its ecology, ASIO, Mafia-like property developers, it begins with the assassination of a politician in Sydney's Domain. The *Armigers*, realizing he has been observed by a member of the Green Daggers bike gang decide to wipe out all of them. The police are concerned as the bike killings increase and, under pressure from ASIO who see a connection between the assassination and the bike murders, they plant a drug squad undercover man, Stone, in the gang to investigate the killings. Stone clears it all up in the end, more by default than by able police work, and as the end he leaves a lesson. None of the implications of the political background is realized. The obvious relation for the property developers of keeping their professional killer forces for hire (less an unprofessional enough to get going) is not mentioned. You do not have to have seen *Italy* recently to know that you get rid of the operative

who bungled, especially when the alternative is the messy business of disposing of all 20 or so members of a bike gang — it is just a simple business principle.

Unfortunately, the script provides an array of similar logic problems that are pushed into the background noise and noise as the film progresses. The director, Sandy Harbutt, who was co-writer (with Michael Rafterman) and plays the leader of the Green Daggers, invests the material with some excitement in the movie bike scenes but he runs dead on the police-ASIO segments and fails altogether to develop the credibility of the assassin-property developers axis. The performance of the bikes are excellent — it is obvious when the director's enthusiasm for the dialogue in these sequences is natural and the performance lends it well. Lee Mitchell is not given a chance to develop his scenes. Being into an idealistic character. Although a lot of words attempt to be made to establish his role, this is dictated more by plot mechanics than a desire to provide the film with some extra dimensions. The scripting of the police-ASIO sequences and the role of Ken Shorter, Ray Bennett and Owen Wagoner, making their police character appear rather passive and lacking in insight into the obvious. These sequences lack verisimilitude.

The single performance flaw is Ken Shorter in his pivotal role of Stone. He is too sympathetic in his appearance, too bourgeois in his personal life (he does drug bustings make enough to live like that or does Stone take bribes?), too whinging in his attempt to reason with his opponents, too servile in his relationship to the gang to be convinc-

ing. Despite his bike riding prowess and polo expertise.

Harbutt's directing is often unresponsive to the nuances of situations. Take as an example the well performed, though somewhat marginal sequence where a young man is cornered in a pub by Todd, one of the Green Daggers. This is shot without visual reference to Stone at all. We are aware that he is present and he finally interrupts Todd preventing the situation becoming nasty. Stone is in a tertiary position doing this, of course. We cannot control the cop in his, so he cannot stand by and watch the young man beaten up. But, he has also to choose his moment carefully or he could create a worse situation and blow his cover. There is real conflict here for Stone and the same only fits the film in terms of this conflict. Why then does Harbutt avoid it? Perhaps he thought Shorter could not handle the subtleties of the confrontation. Perhaps he decided it was necessary to score a few more points off the audience with a couple of these character performances. Perhaps he simply failed to realize the situation in terms of the overall development of his film.

The script of *Stone* is thoroughly (re)conceivable. The best that can be said of Sandy Harbutt's directing is that it illustrates the script. He illustrates it convincingly in the bike sequences, but otherwise he is unaware of, or too, the most superficial implications of what he is doing. ■

Kate Quince

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Crystal Voyager

The *Crystal Voyager* emerges from the risk of naïfety merely to demonstrate it is an extraordinarily successful cinematography, a sublime experience aided by innovative technology. As such it is likely to require invitation rather than genuine expression in its evolution. The *Crystal Voyager* earned our good wishes even before it went into production, it has since excited a fair amount of favourable comment in the British press. But now we have glimpsed the finished product (a replacement at the Melbourne Film Festival) we must admit disappointment that the singularity of its central idea is diluted in exposition and measure in production values.

The *Crystal Voyager* is ruggedly young. American George Greenough, a dedicated devotee of the surface narrative on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, weaving, remarkably self-reliant, with the aid of one who has come to trust with his private demons, he is something special amongst his fellow pilgrims. This is his film, a conscious manifesto of striving which starts out as a meandering, loose movie and shifts gears all the way up to the transcendental experience of the last 25 minutes which crushes the cinematic star into and makes it into 2001.

Albert Finney photographed and recorded Greenough over two years of building his own boat and sailing it to remote waters with a couple of mates, sailing all the while from California to Borneo Bay. The soundtrack carries songs by the *Crystal Voyager* band and Greenough's apt, loose-limbed comments: a school failure, he mastered enough technology to successfully apply purpose hydrodynamics in the designing of his own boards, to construct his sea-going boat he needed not three tons of useless equipment from ship yards, and even cut his own bronze fittings. Eventually the Morning Light is launched, and the excursion is under way.

If it were not for the extraordinary first preview, The *Crystal Voyager* might have claimed our respect, but surely our enthusiasm. Unhindered in development, invisible though some too perceptive to lose, it communicates a kind of mystery that contrasts with the jockey hand sell of some other surf movies. Too much of the surf footage we have seen is vitiated by doom-lippy, out-oriented film makers. Even the natural tension of the long take and all the board ride are elementary, one to the other. We gain a sense of totality from shots of the "table" of the sea remote from land, while the lyrics speak of the "rolling of time". We enter film-waters, otherwise unacquainted with surfing love, become aware of a historic in the waves themselves — the gathering swell, the rising crest, the heavy tumble — and in board stunts when kneeling, hand and shoulders three possible like ahead of the curving breaker, shoulders and arms in strong push strokes clearing the bellies of the broken wave (does this sound a word? "Swashling", perhaps), when standing, more strain but more grace, challenge rather than mastery, the inexorably changing parameters of angle, speed and curve in the image of the rider in the dark belly of the wave, the eerie suspense of slow motion, the directions of telephoto which lend an apt quality to the hand-on waves of a rider on the wave.

The passages of surfing footage in The *Crystal Voyager* are relatively controlled and con-

templated. The characteristic retrospection of the genre is reduced, the opportunity for contemplation approved. While Greenough is shown carving for spray and less-building the broad develops the rhythm. "Two legends", there is a sudden cut to him riding a wind-swept surf alone to the sound of a seaplane engine, the sky is red as a pan across the prospect of the surf, just as debris like dust motes in the sea, as a white sea, the wind whips the spray at the edges of great combers seductively twinkling in telephoto, the single board rider suggests this delicate turbulence as "no regret" is heard again, the song is swelling down as he rides one horse in a long take.

This progression is typical of the film. There is no first nature of form, rather the impression of a substantial principle of growth. There is much form only for what we usually understand as a sequence, we might call it a non-deliberate succession. We may remember particular shots, some of them grounded in a few exaggerated wide-angle shots, the zoom-out from Greenough's cat, as a metaphor of first release, others emphatic, as the wide angle shot from a board lying in the trough of a swell as another board looms up and out in one sleek swift motion, or the vision of a dark rider cradled in his run across the face of a white curler, to rise above it for an instant, conscious and legendary.

In the penultimate segment of the film Greenough and his companions pursue the excursion into an uncharted area, realised step by step by the hand firm of the dying sun against an ink sky, the boundaries enter the water and push away from the boat, from the Morning Light. Their unreflected grace convey a sense of entirely belonging in their strange and silent place, as California's sea makes night. And then the *Crystal Voyager* begins. With the first "pump" of Paul Flood's choice we are captured to that "lovely impulse" Shelley and Keats write of, inspired in Richard's drunken boat through the green and silent element, at one moment mirroring in the sun's neon-burst through the distant canopy of water above, then direct through a journey of silver bubbles, then swept over by a silent moving wave, glancing the "crystal boundaries" where the Dancer of the Earth entered his temple. We are entranced in the patterns, textures, colours of the watery curtain and the music of the spheres.

We are no longer on the wave but in it. Shooting at ten times normal speed, Greenough's camera with its 2.5 mm lens was carving through the tube with him. As in a dream we make our meditative way through the mysterious slow of the slowly swirling wave, the vortex of crystal itself's loss riding the eye towards the distant horizon flamed in the far opening, the remote device or to a purring chime while all around us is turbulence in suspension.

The music becomes more engine like, the lyrics take up again as we emerge from our new birth like strangers in a strange land to see in the light of day a wave race its uncertain course bright above the horizon, to drive our own boat back across the bow of a breaking wave, great walls of water sweep past and over in swift flowing curves. Here all subside, a contemplative distance sets in, our perceptions re-discover serenity, the credits race against a succession of facets which die away to darkness.

The "marvellous journey" of The *Crystal Voyager* has a number of properties analogous to psychedelic experience. There is a rapid and rapid original which induces an absorbed, trance-like condition, a biased focus of references are apprehended and critical faculties suspended; there is a loss of body and ego boundaries, and a temporary shift of personal values, reality vanishes post-directed thought.

Of course the passage presents us with a perceptual novelty, and we incline to the receptive in an attempt to describe it as this early stage. As Greenough's amateurism waxes, our mastery may find this kind of cinematography subject to severely diminishing returns. But that is no less a reason to hasten the passage at the outset.

Searching for pure form experiences and/or associations, we may wish to explore the psychosomatic implications of the imagery. I prefer to point to the film's affinity with the work of English Romantic poets, with, say, Yeats' "descent by the dreamless sea".

Most remarkable is the extent to which it may serve as some photo-ecology in the imaginative flights of Shelley, especially the marvellous journey of *Almagest*, his *Spirit of Solitude*. Resisting to the "as if" category of film concept, I committed you to these origins elicited a century and a half ago, compounding the quest with his symbolic projection into the woman's sexual wish.

"A restless impulse urged him to embark
And soon lost Death on the dream ocean's
shore."

Following his eager soul —

As one that in a silver vessel floats

Along the dark and refted waters' bed
The streaming boat — A whirling swirl of
oil.

With fierce gulls and prepossessing fovee,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.

Calm and rippling in the foehn'd war
of wave running on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool
drive

With dark obliterating cones, he sails:

And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth
wave,
The little boat was driven —

New passing on the edge of the vast wave.
Now leaving far behind the heaving seas.
That felt, commanding, could, safely led —
As if that first and wisest human form,
Had been an elemental and —

The spirit of The *Crystal Voyager* celebrates a similar ray of passage.

Sail on, then scud up shell of Neptune's!

John Flax

John Flax resides in Rio de Janeiro, Co. Teffe (Germany).



letters

Replies to Barratt Hodsdon's, "State of False Consciousness in Australian Film" (Cinema Papers—April).

Dear Sir,

One of the troubles with contemporary discussions of "education" is that there are so many people saying what is wrong with it and so few suggesting positive alternatives. Barratt Hodsdon's article has a nice balance between the negative and the positive, but *Cinema Papers* could serve a very much needed and profitable service by encouraging some positive alternative approaches to dramatic perception.

Barratt Hodsdon makes a number of important points, such as the necessity of a link between theory and practice, the necessity of a link between the history and theory of film, and the necessity of a more disciplined approach to film. What is needed is a well-explicated theory of cinema to put these piecemeal suggestions into a meaningful context. There are two other problems raised by Mr. Hodsdon which are much more fundamental. His criticisms of subjective approaches to cinema, and of the lowly status of cinema, and these two are inevitably linked. They must be faced head

on. There seems to be the impression that film is of little worth, and is regarded as little worth because of its subjectivity, and because of subjective approaches to it — a bit of journalistic criticism.

The answer is not to go "all intellectual". The glory of cinema is that it is subjective of its nature; every film evokes something different to every person who sees it. Every good film is always personally relevant. That must be the basis on which the status of cinema is built, because that is the truth. Any other foundation would be false, and any edifice built on it easily shattered. What is needed is the explication of a subjective-objective methodology, not a retreat to the objective empiricism of nineteenth century science. As Northrop Frye has pointed out, "The axioms and postulates of criticism have to grow out of the art it deals with." Only when we know what cinema is can we know how to approach it. Cinema is not an objective science, it is a subjective (let's hope well-disciplined) rhetoric-poetic. It requires a response which is both subjective and well-disciplined, and that is not contradictory, for we have faculties to cover both those activities — I mean the intention and the intellect.

As regards the status of the cinema, we must not rest content until it has the confirmation formerly held by science. Our outdated education system is still based on a scientific model. What we need is a process of continual re-creation based on a cinematographical method. Cinema should be the model of 20th century efforts (insight through leisure), not a discarded training of education.

There are, then, three main steps in the promotion of cinematic education:

- (i) To define cinema, to say what it is
- (ii) To work out an appropriate response to cinema, based on the definition
- (iii) To establish the cinematographical method as the paradigm for all education

Yours faithfully,
Miles Collins

Dear Sir,

While there is much in Barratt Hodsdon's article in the last issue of *Cinema Papers* with which I must agree, I regret his naive assertion that no worthy tradition of film making existed in Australia, nor any context for film practice (as in France).

He just doesn't know what he is talking about. There just isn't

enough information about Australian film history for him to form such an opinion. It is a dangerous assumption which colours the rather flip comments by Barry McGuire about Australian history "not being on our side."

History is not on anybody's side. It just is, and we have to accept it, because no amount of wishful thinking will change it. McGuire's position, shared by other misguided Australians, is to think that we should throw out Australian history as not being sufficiently radical and start anew with international (mis-)setting models of revolution.

This is equivalent to throwing the baby out with the bath-water. Or to believing that one was particularly badly born under a delphic sign at the bottom of the garden, and hence had no parents who could embrace one. True maturity comes from accepting one's parents, and one's personal and national history for what it is, and learning what one can, in order to change the present and the future.

It has long been obvious to me that Australian film makers have lost contact with their predecessors in such a vacuum of ignorance and arrogance, it was natural to presume that they were "inventing" new techniques which in fact had been used long before in Australia.

For example, many 1960's Australian film makers presumed that their use of hand-held camera, street locations, and amateur actors was something new and came in a direct line as it were from the French New Wave Cinema. In fact they needn't have looked so far away — Raymond Longford's classic *Sensational Story* (1915) was made on a shoe-string budget, with amateur actors playing themselves, in street locations, and it is still shown and enjoyed today here and in places like Buenos Aires. Perhaps these rather primitive cineastes might have spent their time more fruitfully by looking at this film as well as *The Cousins*. Then instead of trying to graft a foreign film mode on to Australian staples, they may have dealt with Australian material in a genuinely Australian manner.

When new film arrive like *The Case That Ate Paris* it is tempting to say that they do not fit within an Australian film making idiom, but in fact they do, and the test is to ask could they have been made in any country other than Australia, by anyone other than an Australian?

This film, which I enjoyed while admitting it is not a classic, taught me at least two things about Australia — both of which are ugly — but which I accept as part of my heritage. The first is our blood-thirsty, aggressive attitude to car accidents (it killed an old man and nearly lost my licence — yes, old predators are a damn nuisance at night) — note Phil Adams' *Jack & Jill* also had accident scenes. The second, our equally blood-mind attitude to sports and moral delinquency. I know of no other American or English usage of the term 'vegetar' (short for 'vegetable' — you have your full veggie, your half-veg and your quarter-veg) in context and style (therefore it is an Australian film, and take it from me we have a lot we can usefully learn from our films, because film makers in the past faced similar production, distribution and exhibition problems as do Australian film-makers today.

Modern film makers all over the world are not so bothered to sit on their backbones in their respective national cinemas (note we haven't yet got one devoted exclusively to film), studying their country's past output and family learning. Yet our Film School outstripping enough does not yet cater for Australian film history.

I agree with Barratt that the school has concentrated on 'technical' rather than the more important 'intellectual' aspects. This again is part of the Australian tradition of anti-intellectualism and crass materialism (You can't trust those poofy long hairs, and if you can touch expensive video/film equipment then you know your money's well spent, even if there are only ignorant students to use the most sophisticated equipment in the world). Any Tom, Dick or Harry can get a book and find out how to set a camera and light up, but what he can't do easily is decide what to put in front of the camera, history, and film aesthetics courses. That in my opinion School, now that the before and never step has passed.

— Ross Cooper,
History, Monash

- (1) *Reckless* has not written this 'history' but rather has lifted facts, among others, from *Reckless* and then some in cultural background groups to the film produced. See my review in *Reckless* (April 1982). There has also been no Australian release in context of the film. *Reckless* is the only book I have seen published as film history.
- (2) A New Edition.



Los
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In The Films Of Luis Buñuel

"L'erotisme est ce qui separe l'homme de la bete."

George Bataille

Eroticism is often claimed to be highly personalised, and to a degree it is. Since erotic works are those that infer, rather than state, it is their ability to stimulate one's sexual fantasies that makes them subjective. The stimulus is constant, the interpretations diverse. Possibly one could define the truly erotic work as that which liberates the most varied of imaginations.

Buñuel can be an intensely erotic director, especially when his sensual images deliberately defy rational analysis — *Viridiana* removing ashes from the fireplace and putting them in her uncle's bed. Buñuel's eroticism is also extremely earthy, almost obscenely so. The girl posing milk over her legs while sitting in a dirty barn, is an affront on her purity, a corruption of innocence. This feeling is also heightened by the presence of the blind beggar who later destroys her. However, the shock of all the semen spilling between her thighs is seen by our eyes, not his.

Scott Mistry.



Viridiana



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